

SEXUAL HEALTH CENTRE

THE  
CLINIC

A FRIENDLY +  
CONFIDENTIAL SERVICE

**NORTHERN**  
Regional College 

## What is The Clinic?

It is a free, confidential service for age 16+ males and females, which provides family planning and sexually transmitted infection testing. Any personal information you provide cannot be accessed by any healthcare professional except clinic staff and will be held in the strictest confidence.

### What are the opening times?

Newtownabbey  
Monday mornings from 9.30am - 1pm

Trostan Avenue  
Thursdays from 9.30am - 3.30pm

### How do I make an appointment?

Please call: 028 2565 5615

Newtownabbey – Report to the clinic receptionist.  
Trostan Avenue – Go straight to the Pastoral Care Centre and report to the Clinic receptionist.

The Clinic receptionist will ask you to fill out a registration form.

Remember to give a current mobile number as we may need to contact you.

### If you have no symptoms but are just worried

If you have no symptoms but are just worried, you may have to provide urine sample or have a blood test.

In certain circumstances we will offer you a chaperone to accompany you to The Clinic. The service is still totally confidential.

### What if I need any treatment?

- If treatment is required this will be given to you during your appointment at no cost.
- The (non-judgmental) staff are professionally trained in all sexual health problems.
- Information will not be passed to your Doctor unless your permission is given.

## What are the most common Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI)?

### Chlamydia

Chlamydia is caused by bacteria found in semen and vaginal fluids, which are easily passed from one person to another through sexual contact.

At least half of all infected men and women will not have any symptoms at all. Symptoms can show up 1-3 weeks after coming into contact with Chlamydia, many months later or not until infection spread to other parts of the body.

#### SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

**Women** - An unusual vaginal discharge. Pain when passing urine. Bleeding between periods. Bleeding after sex. Pain and/or bleeding when having sex. Lower abdominal pain.

**Men** - A white/cloudy and watery discharge from the penis. Pain when passing urine. Painful and swollen testicles. Lower abdominal pain.

Infection in the rectum rarely has symptoms but may cause discomfort and discharge in both men and women. If the eyes become infected you may experience pain, swelling, irritation and discharge (conjunctivitis). Infection of the throat usually has no symptoms.

#### IF LEFT UNTREATED

The infection can spread to other parts of the body causing damage and serious long-term complications.

In women Chlamydia can spread to other reproductive organs causing pelvic inflammatory disease (PID).

This can lead to long-term pelvic pain, blocked fallopian tubes, infertility and ectopic pregnancy (pregnancy that occurs outside the womb).

In men it can lead to a painful infection in the testicles and possibly reduce fertility. It is thought that in some men it might cause the prostate to become inflamed.

### Gonorrhoea

This is caused by bacteria, which is easily passed from one person to another through sexual contact.

The bacteria usually live inside the cells of the cervix (entrance to the womb), the urethra (tube from where urine comes), the rectum (back passage), the throat and occasionally the eyes. The infection can spread if you have vaginal, anal, oral sex or share sex toys.

#### SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

**Women** - An unusual vaginal discharge which may be thin/watery or yellow/greenish. Pain when passing urine. Lower abdominal pain or tenderness.

**Men** - A white, yellow or green discharge from the tip of the penis. Pain when passing urine. Pain or tenderness in the testicles.

#### IF LEFT UNTREATED

Without proper treatment the infection can spread to other parts of the body causing damage and serious long-term complications. In women Gonorrhoea can spread to other reproductive organs causing pelvic inflammatory disease (PID).

This can lead to long-term pelvic pain, blocked fallopian tubes, ectopic pregnancy (pregnancy that occurs outside the womb) and infertility. In men it may lead to inflamed testicles, an inflamed prostate gland and infertility.

## Genital Warts

Genital warts are caused by a virus known as the human papillom virus (HPV). This is easily passed from one person to another through sexual contact.

Once you have the virus it can remain in the body and be passed on before the warts are noticeable or after they have disappeared. Warts can be external or internal. In women warts can be found on or in the vagina, vulva, cervix and anus.

In men warts can be found on or around the penis, scrotum and urethra, and on or inside the anus. The virus can be spread if you have vaginal or anal sex or share sex toys. It is possible, but unusual, to develop warts in the mouth or on the lips from oral sex.

Warts can spread to the area around the anus without having anal sex.

### SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

It can take from two weeks to several months or longer after coming into contact with the virus before the warts may appear. If you do get visible warts you may notice small, fleshy growths, bumps or skin changes which appear anywhere in the genital or anal area.

You might see or feel them or your partner may notice them. They can be flat, smooth, small bumps or quite large, pink, cauliflower-like lumps. Warts can appear on their own or in groups and are usually painless.

They may occasionally itch and cause some inflammation. They may also cause some bleeding from the anus or urethra.

### IF LEFT UNTREATED

The body can often fight off HPV without treatments. If left untreated genital warts may disappear, but some stay the same, or grow larger in number and size. However, if you delay treatment you risk passing the virus on to someone else.

## Genital Herpes

Genital herpes is caused by a virus which is easily passed from one person to another through sexual contact. It can be passed from one person to another during sex with someone who is having an outbreak of genital herpes at the time or by skin contact with a herpes simplex sore.

There are two types of the virus known as herpes simplex virus 1 and herpes simplex virus 2, which are found on the mouth, nose (cold sores), on the genital and anal area and on the eyes, fingers and hands. Once you have the virus it can remain in your body and may be passed on before symptoms are noticeable or after they have disappeared.

Genital herpes can spread if you have vaginal, anal, oral sex, or share sex toys. An outbreak of genital herpes is referred to as an episode.

### HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

The blisters and sores are highly infectious so if you or your partner has cold sores or genital herpes:

- Avoid kissing when you or your partner has cold sore around the mouth.
- Avoid oral sex when you or your partner has mouth or genital sores.
- Avoid any genital or anal contact when you or your partner has genital sores.
- Avoid vaginal, anal or oral sex if you feel an episode starting.

### SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

It can take two days to several weeks or longer after coming into contact with the virus before any signs or symptoms appear. In most people it takes around three to four days. Many people will not have any visible signs or symptoms at all, or not be aware of them.

## Syphilis

Syphilis is a bacteria which can be passed from one person to another during sex and skin contact with someone who has syphilis sores or rash.

Once you have the infection it can remain in your body and be passed on before symptoms are noticeable or after they have disappeared.

The infection can spread if you have vaginal, anal, oral sex or share sex toys. It is also possible for a pregnant woman to pass the infection to her unborn baby.

### SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

These are the same in both men and women. If you do get symptoms you might notice the following:

*First stage* - One or more sore, usually painless, will appear where the bacteria entered the body. On average this will be three to four weeks after coming into contact with the infection but could be longer. In women they appear mainly on the vulva, clitoris, cervix, around the opening of the urethra, around the anus and mouth.

In men they appear mainly around the opening to the urethra, on the penis and foreskin, around the anus and mouth. The sores of first stage syphilis are very infectious and may take 2-6 weeks to heal by which time the bacteria will have spread to other parts of the body.

*Second stage* - If left untreated this stage usually occurs some weeks after the appearance of the sores.

### SYMPTOMS INCLUDE:

- A painless rash, normally not itchy, spreading all over the body or in patches, often including the palms of the hands and soles of the feet.

- Flat, warty-like growths on the vulva in women and around the anus in both men and women.
- A flu-like illness, tiredness and loss of appetite with swollen glands (this can last for weeks or months).
- White patches on the tongue or the roof of the mouth.
- Patchy hair loss.

The second stage of syphilis is very infectious and can last several weeks or months.

*Third stage/Latent syphilis* - When the infection remains untreated it is called latest syphilis and can still be infectious. During this stage the person infected may have no further symptoms. A latent period with no symptoms or obvious signs can last for the rest of someone's life.

After many years untreated syphilis may start to cause very serious damage to the heart, brain, eyes other internal organs, bones and nervous system. At this stage syphilis could be fatal.

## HIV

HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus. This is a virus that can damage the body's immune system so that it cannot fight off some infections. This virus can be passed from one person to another if blood, semen, pre-ejaculate (pre-cum), vaginal fluids or breast milk of a person who is HIV positive enters the body of someone who is HIV negative.

This can happen:

- By having unprotected vaginal, anal, oral sex or sharing sex toys with someone who has HIV.
- By using a needle syringe ('works') that has already been used by someone who is HIV positive.
- When a woman with HIV passes the virus to her baby before or during birth or by breastfeeding.

### SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Some people experience flu-like symptoms a few days or weeks after infection. These may include fever, rash, swollen glands, a sore throat, mouth or throat ulcers and aching joints and muscles. These symptoms are sometimes called seroconversion illness and usually last for about one to two weeks. At least half of all newly infected people are thought to experience some of these symptoms but many people have no symptoms at all or mistake them for the flu or some other illness.

HIV is diagnosed by a blood test which is checked for antibodies to HIV. Antibodies are your body's response to infection with a virus. If the antibodies are present that means you are HIV positive.

Once HIV is diagnosed a number of tests monitor the stage of the infection and indicate whether or when treatment should be started. At the moment there is no cure for HIV but there are drugs available to prevent or treat many of the illnesses to which people with HIV are prone. There are treatments known as antiretroviral or combination therapy from which most people with HIV will benefit.

## Why would I come to The Clinic?

You are thinking about having sex for the first time?

You want to talk to someone about sexual health issue?

Your contraceptive has failed e.g. condom burst and you need emergency contraception.

Pregnancy test.

Thinking about what contraception is best for you? Pill, condoms etc.

Have you had unprotected sex? Remember that sexually transmitted infections such as Chlamydia may have no symptoms.

Starting a new relationship and you want to have a check up?

Who will I see when  
I attend The Clinic?

The person you will see when  
you come to the clinic is:

**Dr Tara Farrington**

## The Clinic

Please call: 028 2565 5615 (You may be asked to leave a confidential message and a team member of The Clinic will get back to you!)

Students and staff can access The Clinic from all other campuses



Northern Health  
and Social Care Trust



Public Health  
Agency