

# CDC's STI Treatment Guidelines: Using History to Inform the Future of STD Management

STD Prevention  
**SUCCESS  
STORIES**



CDC published the first formal, national recommendations for gonorrhea therapy in 1972<sup>1</sup>. Since that time, the agency's [Division of STD Prevention \(DSTDP\)](#) has relied on the latest scientific and clinical research studies in diagnosis, clinical evaluation, and prevention to publish management and treatment recommendations<sup>2</sup>, and [STI Treatment Guidelines](#) (1982 – present). In its current comprehensive form, it is published approximately every 4-5 years.

“STIs continue to pose a public health risk, with close to 20 million people acquiring an infection each year,” said Dr. Kimberly Workowski, a DSTDP Medical Officer, who has contributed to the development and evolution of the Guidelines for nearly twenty years. “The Guidelines represent an important strategy in improving reproductive health and HIV prevention efforts.”

CDC's [National Network of Clinical Prevention Training Centers \(PTCs\)](#) help bring the strength of the STI Treatment Guidelines

>12.2 million  
views of the 2015  
Guidelines

>332,000  
downloads of  
the app

## Shaping the Future of STI Diagnosis and Treatment

*Access to STI Treatment Guidelines content has never been easier. Anyone, anywhere can quickly:*

- **Click:** on the comprehensive, easy to navigate [STI Treatment Guidelines](#) website for thorough answers to diagnosis and treatment questions.
- **Access:** the clear-cut, streamlined, [Pocket Guide](#) for quick tips on diagnosing and treating specific STIs.
- **Display:** the high-resolution, printable [Wall Chart](#) for treatment guidance at-a-glance.
- **And coming soon:** the newly-updated, convenient smartphone app (for Apple and Android devices).

### **Where do we go from here? The future of STI diagnosis and treatment is still being written.**

CDC updates its recommendations based on scientific evidence and advances in diagnosis and treatment. Future editions will include:

- more diagnostic techniques and treatment recommendations,
- more epidemiologic data on antimicrobial resistant pathogens,
- more guidance on prevention in the ever-changing healthcare environment, and
- more partner services recommendations.



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to life – linking STI care providers directly to training focused on disease management and prevention. “The Guidelines are based on the best scientific evidence for infection management, offering a stringent, standard, and effective approach that helps clinicians successfully diagnose and treat various infections,” said Dr. Laura Bachmann, the Chief Medical Officer in DSTDP.

Dr. Edward Hook, Professor of Infectious Diseases at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, who has served as an expert consultant for each edition since 1989, says the STI Treatment Guidelines—one of CDC’s most accessed publications—provides a reliable ‘toolbox’ for clinicians treating patients. “It’s a truly comprehensive, quality resource that is used by healthcare practitioners all over the world. And with technology like the mobile app, for my colleagues and myself – it’s something we can regularly access anytime, anywhere.”

## The Origins of a Timely Resource

In the early years of publication, the Guidelines helped usher in standardized treatment recommendations for STD clinics. “Clinicians needed accessible, clear-cut treatment solutions, and the Guidelines became the ‘go-to’ reference for treatment,” said Dr. Gail Bolan, former Director of DSTDP and a pioneering expert consultant for the Guidelines in the mid-1980s.

[The Guidelines have continued to examine emerging or changing public health challenges throughout the years.](#) “The foundation for this versatility is the collections of researched and evidence-based papers accompanying each publication of the Guidelines,” said Dr. Jonathan Zenilman, a former CDC Epidemic Intelligence Service Officer, now Professor of Medicine at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, who was instrumental in revamping and expanding the publication during the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, the Guidelines expanded in scope and capacity to serve both the public and private sectors and audiences located all around the globe. These enhancements focused on: **1)** identifying and treating asymptomatic patients, **2)** incorporating confidential HIV testing and counseling recommendations, and **3)** moving the publication onto an easily accessible, [public website](#) with updated, comprehensive, and fully searchable content.

Further additions in the past decade have addressed: **1)** detailed clinical management guidelines; **2)** cutting-edge diagnostic methods and treatment for several common STDs; **3)** emerging sexually transmitted infections, **4)** alternative treatment options, **5)** recommendations for healthcare management of adolescents, pregnant women, men who have sex with other men (MSM), women who have sex with other women (WSW), and transgender patients; and **6)** easy accessibility to content via a smartphone app.

“We are excited about the potential to improve the content as well as the process of preparing the STI Treatment Guidelines. The Guidelines will continue to evolve and benefit from new technologies and advances in medical practice and informatics. Clinical decision support systems and artificial intelligence can help inform the development of clinical guidelines, optimize the diagnosis and treatment of STIs, and ultimately improve the quality of care and patient outcomes,” said Dr. Raul Romaguera, Acting Director of DSTDP.

<sup>1</sup> Recommended Treatment Schedules for Gonorrhea MMWR March 1972 21:82

<sup>2</sup> Recommended Treatment for Gonorrhea MMWR 1974, 1979