

## Is there any treatment?

Injectable penicillin cures syphilis. Herpes cannot be cured with antibiotics, but the symptoms can be managed with drugs or drying treatments applied to the ulcer. Depending on the cause, anal tears are treated in different ways. For example, warm salt baths, foods to soften your bowel motions or special ointments. Fungi and bacteria can be treated with medicated creams.

## What happens if the ulcer is not treated?

Untreated ulcers can get bigger and cause more pain and damage to the skin. Syphilis ulcers will go away without treatment but this does not mean the infection is cured. You will still be infectious to others and the infection can lead to heart, brain and bone problems. Treatment is more complicated if this happens. Herpes ulcers may reappear causing pain and discomfort. Sometimes they take many weeks to heal. With the initial infection of herpes, some people have fever and an irritation to the lining of the brain. Anogenital ulcers can take longer to heal and treat for people infected with HIV.

## What else do I need to know about anogenital ulcers?

- Finish all the drugs used to treat the ulcer.
- Avoid sexual intercourse for at least seven days because the infection may not be cured yet. Use a condom if you cannot avoid sex.
- Return for a follow-up appointment after the treatment to check that you are better.
- Regularly clean the anogenital area with mild soap and water to keep it healthy.
- Condoms provide the best protection against anogenital ulcers

### This series of 12 fact sheets including:

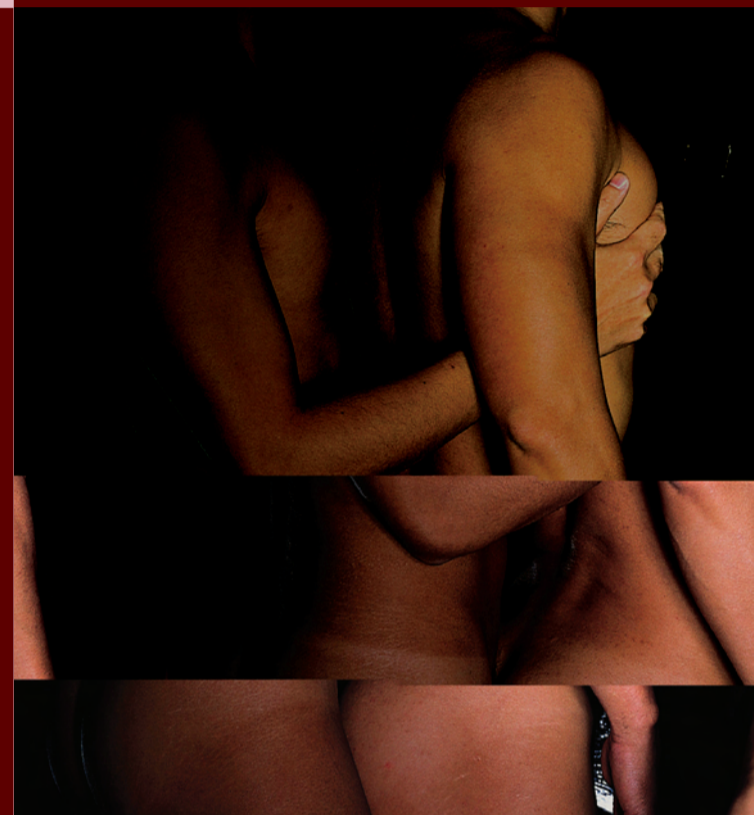
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For more information please contact:

Dr. Chavalit Mangkalaviraj,  
IUSTI Asia Pacific Branch  
Tel: 0-2286-3263  
E-mail: [chavalit@cottisa.org](mailto:chavalit@cottisa.org), [tmsstd@bkk.a-net.th](mailto:tmsstd@bkk.a-net.th)  
Website: [www.cottisa.org](http://www.cottisa.org)

# Anogenital Ulcer



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## What is an anogenital ulcer?

An anogenital ulcer is a break in the skin around the anus or genital area.

## How do I know if I have an anogenital ulcer?

An anogenital ulcer can appear like a cut or tear and can also be a lump with a hole on the top ('sore'). When it heals there may be scab on the top of the ulcer. The ulcer can be painful or painless, it might bleed or produce pus. The ulcer or skin around it can also be itchy.

Your doctor might see an ulcer that you did not notice during a 'check up'. If you see an ulcer, you should seek help immediately.

## What causes anogenital ulcers?

Genital ulcers are commonly caused by sexually transmitted infections like syphilis or herpes. Other common causes include skin or anal tears and skin problems.

## How do I find out what caused the anogenital ulcer?

You will need to see a doctor. The doctor will check your genitals and, if you have anal sex, the outside and inside of the anus for any ulcers. To inspect the anus, a small tube called a proctoscope is inserted inside. Syphilis is diagnosed through a blood test.

## Having an ulcer increases your risk of getting or transmitting HIV.



Seattle STD/HIV Prevention Training Center  
Source: University of Washington

## How did I get this ulcer?

Sexually transmitted infections (STI) are passed on by having anal, oral or vaginal sex without a condom with someone who has the infection. Anal tears can develop when the skin around the anus is not routinely kept clean and dry. Otherwise the constant presence of extra moisture and feces make the skin of the anus weak and more likely to break open.

Organisms, called fungi and bacteria that are normally found on healthy skin, can grow too much on weak skin and make the skin even weaker.

Receptive anal intercourse can also cause anal tears. This happens when there is not enough lubrication (the anus is not slippery enough to allow the penis to go inside easily) or when the anal muscles are not relaxed before having sex (the anus is too tight to allow a penis inside). Anal tearing is common after being raped.