• Avoid sexual contact from the time you first feel any symptoms until the sores are completely healed, that is, the scab has fallen off and new skin has formed where the sore was.

Vaginal Candidiasis (Thrush)

What is it?

Candidiasis is an infection caused by a fungus. This fungus is found in just about everyone's body. Vaginal candidiasis,a fungal infection in the vagina, is very common in women whose immune systems have been damaged by HIV. It is also more frequent in women who are pregnant or taking antibiotics for another infection.

How is it treated?

There are two ways to treat vaginal candidiasis: using a cream or pill placed directly into the vagina or a pill that is swallowed:

Clotrimazole: This medication is placed directly into the vagina, usually before bedtime, for a week to 10 days. Clotrimazole is available in a cream and a pill (inserted into the vagina).

Fluconazole: This pill is taken by mouth. It is usually effective for women who do not respond to clotrimazole. Fluconazole should be available in all clinics and hospitals. If your clinic or hospital refuses to give it to you when you need it, or does not have stock of it, please contact the Treatment Action Campaign.

Pelvic Inflammatory Disease

The most common and serious complication of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) among women is pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), an infection of the upper genital tract. PID can affect the uterus, ovaries, fallopian tubes, or other related structures. Untreated, PID causes scarring and can lead to infertility, tubal pregnancy, chronic pelvic pain, and other serious consequences.

The two most common germs (bacteria) that can cause PID are Neisseria gonorrhea and Chlamydia trachomatis.

The major symptoms of PID are lower abdominal pain and abnormal vaginal discharge. Other symptoms such as fever, pain in the right upper abdomen, painful intercourse, and irregular menstrual bleeding can occur as well. PID, particularly when caused by chlamydial infection, may produce only minor symptoms or no symptoms at all, even though it can seriously damage the reproductive organs.

If symptoms such as lower abdominal pain are present, the doctor will perform a physical exam to determine the nature and location of the pain. The doctor also should check for fever, abnormal vaginal or cervical discharge, and evidence of cervical chlamydial infection or gonorrhea. If the findings of this exam suggest that PID is likely, the HIV/AIDS Policy Guide advises doctors to begin treatment.

How is it treated?

Your doctor is likely to prescribe antibiotics for at least two weeks. This will usually take the form of two different antibiotics at the same time. The symptoms may go