

How to talk to partners about getting tested for STIs

IT CAN FEEL AWKWARD TO BRING UP STI TESTING, BUT IT'S IMPORTANT AND YOU'LL FEEL BETTER ONCE YOU GET IT OVER WITH. AND YOU NEVER KNOW — YOUR PARTNER MIGHT BE GLAD YOU BROUGHT IT UP. TALKING ABOUT GETTING TESTED SHOWS YOU CARE ABOUT YOUR PARTNER, AND IT CAN EVEN MAKE YOU CLOSER.

How do I ask my partner to get tested?

GETTING TESTED BEFORE HAVING A NEW PARTNER IS ONE OF THE BEST WAYS TO PREVENT STIs, SO IT'S BEST TO DISCUSS GETTING TESTED BEFORE YOU START HAVING ANY TYPE OF SEX.

GETTING TESTED FOR STIs ISN'T ABOUT CHEATING OR NOT TRUSTING YOUR PARTNER. PEOPLE CAN HAVE AN STI FOR YEARS AND NOT KNOW IT — MOST PEOPLE WITH STIs DON'T HAVE ANY SYMPTOMS, AND TESTING IS THE ONLY WAY TO KNOW FOR SURE IF SOMEONE HAS AN STI. YOU CAN SAY THAT YOU WANT TO GET TESTED BECAUSE YOU CARE ABOUT YOUR HEALTH AND THEIR HEALTH.

Texting vs. calling vs. talking in person

THERE IS NO ONE BEST WAY TO HAVE THESE CONVERSATIONS, BUT TALKING ABOUT TEST RESULTS FACE TO FACE COULD POSE SAFETY CONCERNS IN SOME SITUATIONS. IF YOU'RE CONCERNED THAT A PARTNER MAY GET AGGRESSIVE OR VIOLENT, THEN A TEXT IS THE SAFEST WAY TO GO. IN AN IDEAL WORLD, EVERYONE WOULD BE ABLE TO SIT AND HAVE A HEART-TO-HEART THAT ENDS WITH A HUG OF UNDERSTANDING AND GRATITUDE. BUT SINCE THE WORLD ISN'T ALL UNICORNS AND RAINBOWS, A TEXT IS BETTER THAN PUTTING YOURSELF IN HARM'S WAY OR NOT TELLING THEM AT ALL

Facts that could help the conversation:

- MANY STIs CAN BE EASILY CURED WITH MEDICINE. THERE ARE ALSO TREATMENTS FOR THE STIs THAT CAN'T BE CURED, WHICH CAN HELP WITH SYMPTOMS AND LOWER YOUR CHANCES OF GIVING IT TO YOUR PARTNER. WHEN THEY'RE TREATED EARLY, STIs ARE LESS LIKELY TO CAUSE LONG-TERM HEALTH PROBLEMS.
- STI TESTS ARE QUICK, SIMPLE, AND USUALLY PAINLESS. FOR EXAMPLE, SOME RAPID HIV TESTS CAN PROVIDE RESULTS FROM JUST A SWAB INSIDE THE MOUTH IN ONLY 20 MINUTES.
- IF YOU WANT TO GET TESTED AT HOME, YOU CAN GET AN HIV HOME TEST OR SELF-TESTING KITS FOR OTHER STIs.
- IF YOU DON'T FEEL COMFORTABLE TALKING ABOUT STIs WITH YOUR REGULAR DOCTOR, YOU CAN GET TESTED AT A CLINIC INSTEAD.
- THERE ARE PLACES TO GET FREE STI TESTING IF COST IS A BARRIER.

IT'S A GREAT IDEA FOR YOU AND YOUR PARTNER TO GET TESTED TOGETHER SO YOU CAN SUPPORT EACH OTHER. IF YOUR PARTNER WON'T GET TESTED, YOU MAY WANT TO THINK ABOUT WHETHER THIS IS THE RIGHT RELATIONSHIP FOR YOU. SOMEONE WHO WON'T HELP YOU STAY HEALTHY MAY NOT BE THE BEST PERSON TO HAVE A RELATIONSHIP WITH.

Here are some ideas for starting the conversation:

- "THIS IS HARD FOR ME TO TALK ABOUT, BUT I CARE ABOUT YOU AND I THINK IT'S IMPORTANT. HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT GOING TO GET TESTED FOR STIs TOGETHER?"
- "FYI, I GOT TESTED FOR STIs LAST MONTH AND I DIDN'T HAVE ANYTHING. HAVE YOU EVER BEEN TESTED? I WANT US TO MAKE SURE WE'RE TAKING CARE OF EACH OTHER."
- "MANY PEOPLE WHO HAVE AN STI DON'T KNOW IT. WHY TAKE A CHANCE WHEN WE CAN KNOW FOR SURE?"
- "I KNOW WE ALREADY HAD SEX WITHOUT A BARRIER, BUT IF WE'RE GOING TO KEEP DOING IT, I'D LIKE US TO GET TESTED."
- "IF WE'RE GOING TO STOP USING DENTAL DAMS/CONDOMS, WE NEED TO GET TESTED. JUST TO BE SAFE"
- "I FEEL LIKE SEX MIGHT BE IN THE CARDS FOR US SOON, SO WE SHOULD PROBABLY TALK ABOUT GETTING TESTED FOR STIs."
- "I ALWAYS GET TESTED BEFORE HAVING SEX WITH SOMEONE NEW. WHEN WAS YOUR LAST STI TEST?"

How To Talk To Partners About STI Testing



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How to talk to partners about your STI status

IT'S NO FUN TO TELL THE PERSON YOU'RE DATING THAT YOU HAVE AN STI, BUT IT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO, AND IT HELPS THEM STAY HEALTHY. IT'S REALLY IMPORTANT TO ALSO TELL ANY PAST PARTNERS, SO THEY CAN GET TESTED, TOO. THERE'S NO ONE RIGHT WAY TO TALK TO YOUR PARTNERS ABOUT HAVING AN STI, BUT HERE ARE SOME BASIC TIPS THAT MIGHT HELP:

1. TRY TO STAY CALM AND REMEMBER THAT YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY ONE DEALING WITH THIS. MILLIONS OF PEOPLE HAVE STIs, AND PLENTY OF THEM ARE IN RELATIONSHIPS. TRY TO GO INTO THE CONVERSATION WITH A CALM, POSITIVE ATTITUDE. YOUR DELIVERY IS AS MUCH A PART OF YOUR MESSAGE AS YOUR WORDS. HAVING AN STI IS SIMPLY A HEALTH ISSUE, AND IT DOESN'T MEAN ANYTHING ABOUT YOU AS A PERSON.
2. IT'S NORMAL TO BE WORRIED ABOUT HOW YOUR PARTNER'S GOING TO REACT. AND THERE'S NO WAY AROUND IT: THEY MIGHT GET FREAKED OUT. IF THAT HAPPENS, TRY TO STAY CALM AND TALK ABOUT YOUR PLAN TO STAY HEALTHY AND NOT GIVE YOUR STI TO ANYONE. YOU MIGHT JUST NEED TO GIVE YOUR PARTNER A LITTLE TIME AND SPACE TO PROCESS THE NEWS, WHICH IS NORMAL. THEY CAN ALSO TALK TO THEIR DOCTOR ABOUT WAYS TO PROTECT THEMSELVES. IN THE END, THE CONVERSATION MAY EVEN BRING YOU CLOSER TOGETHER.
3. TRY NOT TO PLAY THE BLAME GAME WHEN YOU TALK TO YOUR PARTNER. IF ONE OF YOU TESTS POSITIVE DURING YOUR RELATIONSHIP, IT DOESN'T AUTOMATICALLY MEAN THAT SOMEBODY CHEATED. IT CAN TAKE A WHILE FOR STIs TO SHOW UP ON A TEST, AND MOST PEOPLE DON'T HAVE ANY SYMPTOMS. SO LOTS OF PEOPLE HAVE AN STI FOR A LONG TIME (EVEN YEARS) WITHOUT KNOWING IT AND IT CAN BE HARD TO TELL WHEN AND HOW SOMEONE GOT IT. THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS THAT YOU BOTH GET TESTED. IF IT TURNS OUT ONLY ONE OF YOU HAS A STI, TALK ABOUT HOW YOU CAN KEEP THE OTHER ONE SAFE.

4. KNOW YOUR FACTS. THERE ARE A LOT OF MYTHS ABOUT STIs OUT THERE, SO READ UP ON THE FACTS AND BE READY TO ANSWER YOUR PARTNER'S QUESTIONS. LET YOUR PARTNER KNOW THERE ARE MEDICINES THAT CAN CURE OR HELP TREAT YOUR STI. SAFER SEX TOOLS CAN ALSO HELP PROTECT YOUR PARTNER. EMOTIONS MAY BE RUNNING HIGH, SO A PARTNER MIGHT NOT HEAR OR PROCESS EVERYTHING YOU SHARE.
5. THINK ABOUT TIMING. PICK A TIME WHEN YOU WON'T BE DISTRACTED OR INTERRUPTED, AND CHOOSE A PLACE THAT'S PRIVATE AND RELAXED. IF YOU'RE NERVOUS, YOU CAN PRACTICE OUT LOUD TO YOURSELF OR A FRIEND YOU TRUST. IT MAY SOUND STRANGE, BUT PRACTICING SAYING THE WORDS CAN HELP YOU FIGURE OUT EXACTLY WHAT YOU WANT TO SAY AND FEEL MORE CONFIDENT WHEN YOU TALK TO YOUR PARTNER.
6. SAFETY FIRST. IF YOU'RE AFRAID THAT YOUR PARTNER MIGHT HURT YOU, YOU'RE PROBABLY BETTER OFF WITH AN E-MAIL, TEXT, OR PHONE CALL. CALL 1-800-799-SAFE OR GO TO THE [NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE WEBSITE](#) FOR HELP IF YOU THINK YOU MIGHT BE IN DANGER.

IN SOME STATES, HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS OFFER THE PARTNER NOTIFICATION SERVICES TRUSTED SOURCE PROGRAM AND WILL CONTACT YOUR PREVIOUS PARTNER(S) TO LET THEM KNOW THEY'VE BEEN EXPOSED AND OFFER TESTING AND REFERRALS. IF THAT'S NOT AN OPTION OR YOU'D RATHER NOT HAVE A CLINICIAN DO IT, THERE ARE ONLINE TOOLS THAT LET YOU TEXT OR EMAIL PREVIOUS PARTNERS ANONYMOUSLY. THEY'RE FREE, EASIER TO USE, AND DON'T REQUIRE SHARING ANY OF YOUR PERSONAL INFORMATION.

HERE ARE A FEW OPTIONS:

- TELLYOURPARTNER
- STDHECK
- HEALTH INITIATIVE FOR MEN
- LET THEM KNOW

Stuck on what to say? Here are a couple of examples:

- "I WAS JUST DIAGNOSED WITH [INSERT STI] AND MY CLINICIAN RECOMMENDED THAT MY PREVIOUS PARTNERS GET TESTED FOR THIS. IT DOESN'T ALWAYS CAUSE SYMPTOMS, SO EVEN IF YOU DON'T HAVE ANY, YOU SHOULD STILL BE TESTED TO BE SAFE."
- "I GOT MY TEST RESULTS BACK AND TESTED POSITIVE FOR [INSERT STI]. IT'S TOTALLY TREATABLE AND THE DOCTOR PRESCRIBED A MEDICATION FOR ME TO TAKE FOR [INSERT NUMBER OF DAYS]. I'LL BE TESTED AGAIN IN [INSERT NUMBER OF DAYS] TO MAKE SURE IT'S GONE. YOU PROBABLY HAVE QUESTIONS, SO ASK AWAY."
- "MY RESULTS CAME BACK POSITIVE FOR [INSERT STI]. I CARE ABOUT YOU, SO I GOT ALL THE INFORMATION I COULD ABOUT MY TREATMENT, WHAT THIS MEANS FOR OUR SEX LIFE, AND ANY PRECAUTIONS WE HAVE TO TAKE. WHAT DO YOU WANT TO KNOW FIRST?"
- "BEFORE WE HOOK UP, WE SHOULD TALK STATUS. I'LL GO FIRST. MY LAST STI SCREEN WAS [INSERT DATE] AND I'M [POSITIVE/NEGATIVE] FOR [INSERT STI(S)]. HOW ABOUT YOU?"
- "I HAVE [INSERT STI]. I'M TAKING MEDICATION TO MANAGE/TREAT IT. I THOUGHT IT WAS SOMETHING YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE WE TAKE THINGS FURTHER. I'M SURE YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, SO FIRE AWAY."

Remember: You got this.

ANYONE WHO TREATS YOU POORLY FOR TALKING ABOUT STIs OR HAVING ONE PROBABLY ISN'T WORTH IT. WHETHER YOU ARE BRINGING UP STI TESTS OR THE FACT THAT YOU HAVE AN STI, THERE'S ALWAYS A CHANCE THAT SOMEONE MIGHT RESPOND CRUELLY, GHOST YOU, OR DO SOMETHING ELSE ALONG THOSE RUDE LINES. IT'S THEIR RIGHT TO DECIDE WHO THEY DO AND DON'T WANT TO HAVE SEX WITH. BUT IF SOMEONE TREATS YOU POORLY OVER TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR SEXUAL HEALTH, THEY'RE LIKELY NOT A GREAT PARTNER TO HAVE IN THE FIRST PLACE.