

How to talk about STIs

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The most common symptom is no symptom at all. That's why it's important to talk with your partners about sexual health... even if it's awkward. The good news is that talking about sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and getting tested can help improve your communication and relationships in general. Here are some tips for

starting a conversation.

Take the lead

"I just wanted to let you know that I got tested for STIs last month..." is a strong start. Taking the initiative to get tested, get treated if necessary and know your status keeps you and your partner safer. Once you're ready to have the [conversation](#), you can open up by sharing your results and showing that it's normal to get tested.

If they respond that they haven't been tested or it's been a while since their last checkup, encourage them to get tested, too. That way you'll both be on the same page and have the same information to work with. This is also a good time to remind them that getting tested doesn't mean they have an STI, and if they do, most are curable and all are treatable. Remind them that having an STI doesn't say anything about them; infections can affect anyone.

Jump in together

If you haven't been tested recently either, start a conversation with your partner about both of you getting tested. You can even introduce it as something uncomfortable if that's where you are, i.e. "This is awkward, but I think it's time for us to get tested for STIs. Would you be up for going together?"

This kind of conversation lets you share an awkward experience while empowering you both to take care of yourselves and each other. It's also a quick way to hear from your partner if they have recently been tested, and if so, they can serve as your support system in tackling your own [health](#).

Share your results

Talking about an STI you had or have, or hearing about one from your partner, can be a stressful situation. There are a few things to keep in mind:

- STIs don't define people or their behaviors.
- Many STIs are curable and all are treatable.
- Millions of people contract STIs every year.
- For those in monogamous relationships, an STI doesn't necessarily mean someone cheated (in some cases, it can take years for symptoms to show up, if at all).

Start a conversation like this one in a safe place where you won't be interrupted, and practice what you'd like to say ahead of time. "I've had chlamydia. My doctor treated it, so I don't have it anymore, but it made me realize we should be getting tested more often..." or "I was just diagnosed with gonorrhea and my doctor said you can also get a prescription for the same antibiotics..."

Sometimes people need time to process this type of information, and that's okay – let them know you'd like to continue talking about it when they feel ready.

If your [partner](#) is disclosing an STI to you, remember these facts and consider how you'd want to be treated if you were the one in their place. Be compassionate, avoid judgment and take on your collective health together.

For general information on [sexual health](#) and sexually transmitted infections, visit Beforeplay.org.

Provided by University of Colorado at Boulder

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