

Remember...

Focus on the medical facts about the disease. With most STDs it is difficult - if not impossible - to tell who had it first. **The important thing is that anyone exposed may be infected and should get tested and treated right away.**

How can I protect myself and my partner(s)?

- Wait until you are sure both you and your partner have completed treatment before having sex again. Too often people pass a disease back and forth by having sex before they have finished all their medication.
- STDs get from one person to another through sex. They pass easily through the delicate lining of the mouth, vagina, penis and rectum. Abstinence (not having sex) is the only sure way to prevent sexual transmission of STDs.
- If you have sex, you can reduce your risk of infection by using latex condoms every time. When used the right way, condoms can help protect you from many common STDs, including HIV - one of the most deadly. Be sure to put the condom on before the penis touches the vagina, mouth or anus.
- If you have sex, you can reduce your risk if you have only one uninfected partner who only has sex with you. Use condoms unless tests show that your partner does not have any STDs.
- Alcohol or other drugs can increase risk by causing people to make dangerous choices about sex.
- If you shoot drugs, never share your works (needle and syringe). Don't share or re-use cotton balls, rinse water or other equipment, either.
- Don't share needles to pierce body parts, make tattoos or for anything else.

For HIV/STD testing locations in Texas, call:

2-1-1

For other HIV/STD questions, call:

1 (800) CDC-INFO (English/Español)

1 (888) 232-6348 (TTY)

For more information, go to:

www.dshs.state.tx.us/hivstd



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STD PARTNER NOTIFICATION:

What About Your Partners?



You are not alone.

- **One in five** people between the ages of 15 and 55 are infected with a sexually transmitted disease (STD).
- **One in three** sexually active people will have an STD by the time they are 24.
- **One in eight** teenagers have an STD
- **15 million** Americans are diagnosed with an STD every year.

You didn't create this infection. It happened to someone else before it happened to you. And now that it has happened to you, here are some questions you might have.

Who needs to know they may have been exposed?

Anyone you've had sex with recently. Your health provider or counselor can help you figure out just how long "recently" is; it depends on many different things. If the STD you have is passed through blood (such as HIV or Hepatitis B), anyone you've shared a needle with needs to know, too.

Do I have to tell them?

They need to know. Many people do not have symptoms until after they pass the infection on to others or develop serious health problems. Many of these problems can be avoided if people are told they are at risk, and get tested and treated. Even if your partner(s) has had a check up recently, chances are they were not tested for STDs.

The health department can help notify people that they may have been exposed and may be infected with an STD. Ask your health provider or counselor to explain how that works.

I want to tell my partner, but I don't know how.

You may want to practice with your health provider or counselor. Here are some tips that can really make a difference:

1. **When:** Choose a time to talk with your partner when he or she can give you his/her complete attention. You will need to allow plenty of time to explain and discuss the problem. The sooner you tell your partner, the sooner he/she can get checked and treated.
2. **Where:** Choose a place that is quiet, private and safe. You do not want interruptions and you do not want to be overheard. At the same time, if there is a chance that your partner will become violent, you will want to be close to help.
3. **How:** Focus on the facts and on solving the problem. Avoid accusations and confessions.
 - ♦*Say:* "I tested positive for chlamydia."
 - ♦*Do not say:* "You infected me with chlamydia." or "I've given you an STD."
 - ♦*Do not say:* "You have chlamydia." People can be exposed to STDs without becoming infected.
 - ♦*Explain:* Many people do not have symptoms until after they have passed the infection on to others or developed serious complications. Getting tested is the only way to know for sure, and serious problems can be avoided if they get tested and treated early.
 - ♦*Make sure your partner knows what STD you are talking about!* There are over 40 common STDs and treatment varies from one infection to another.
4. **What next?** Your partner(s) needs to get a medical evaluation as soon as possible. He/she can go to a private physician, a health center or a public health clinic. Ask your health provider or counselor to help you with the choices so you will be able to offer them to your partner(s). You should both know that **if** your partner goes to the same provider that treated you, all information will still be kept confidential. Your information stays private to you; your partner's information stays private to him/her.

I'm afraid s/he is going to be very upset.

People can have a lot of different emotions when they find out they may have an STD. Some are angry. Some are frightened or withdrawn. Many feel ashamed and embarrassed. You know your partner. How does he or she usually deal with bad news?

Try to use language that is kind and thoughtful. STDs do not need blame or guilt to get from one person to another, and blame and guilt won't help you communicate.

Whatever happens, remember two important points:

1. You can't control your partner's response, but you can control your own behavior. You can stay calm even if he/she doesn't.
2. Think before you begin. **If you think this is going to be too hard, your public health provider has trained professionals who can inform your partners for you without letting the partner know anything about you.**

What are some common questions my partner might have?

"Am I infected?"

Answer: "Possibly. There is really no way to know until you get an examination."

"Did you give me a disease?"

Answer: "I don't know who had this first. I only know that I tested positive and we've had sex; that means you should see a doctor and get tested."

"Where did this come from?"

Answer: "I don't know. Either of us could have had this for awhile without knowing it. That makes it pretty hard to pin down where it came from."

"But I don't have any discharge, burning, sores or pain, so I don't think this has anything to do with me."

Answer: "I'm glad you are not in pain, but that doesn't mean there isn't something going on. I care about you and I really want you to be okay. The only way to be sure you are is to go to the clinic and get checked out."