

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

- Wait until you are sure both you and your partner(s) 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. 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 you and your partner do 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](http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/hivstd)

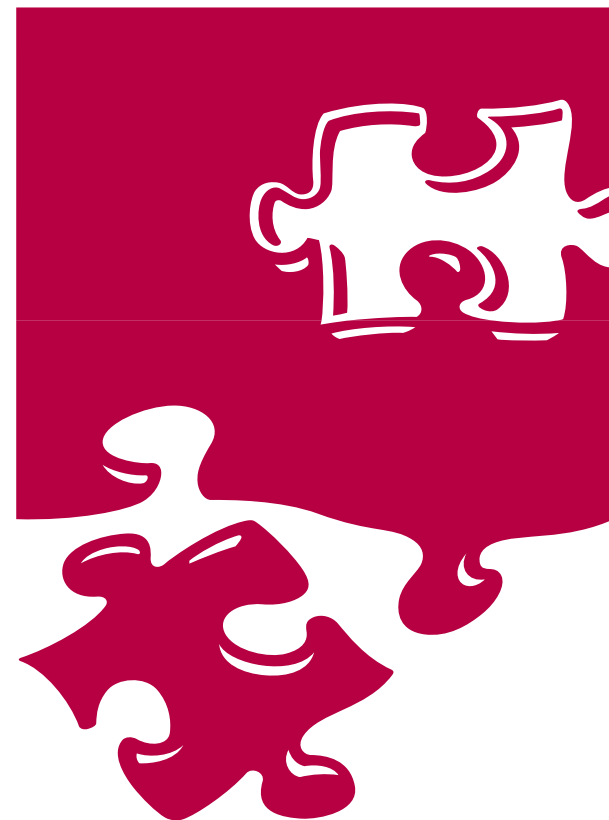


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STD PARTNER NOTIFICATION:

# What If I've Been Exposed to an STD?



## What if I've been exposed to a sexually transmitted disease (STD)?

Chances are you are reading this brochure for one of two reasons:

1. Someone you've had sex or shared needles with has told you he or she has an infection and you may have it, too.
2. A public health professional has told you someone who tested positive for an STD named you as a sex or needle-sharing partner.

Either way, someone is concerned about your health and wants to make sure you do all you can to take care of yourself.

Naturally, you have a lot of questions. This brochure is to help answer those questions, to make sure you know what to do next, and to let you know where to go for more information.

### What's the difference between exposed and infected?

If someone you spend a lot of time with has a cold; chances are you were *exposed* when they coughed or sneezed. You may or may not "catch" the cold. You may wait for many days before you know. If you start having symptoms – even if they are much milder or different from your friend's – we know you have become *infected*.

**With STDs, if you've had sex with someone who is infected, you've been exposed.** We don't have to wait for symptoms. In fact, if we did, we would risk serious health problems because many people with STDs do not know they are infected until they get very sick. Instead, we can usually do simple tests to see if you are infected with an STD *before* problems arise.

### Okay, so am I infected?

The only way to know if you are infected is to go to a doctor's office or clinic and have the appropriate tests done. Even if you have had a recent exam, the specific tests were probably not performed.

Because different STDs need different tests and treatment, it is very important for you to tell whoever examines you **which** STD you may have been exposed to. (For example, "I had sex with someone who has chlamydia.") This will help the doctor or clinician know which tests need to be done.

Because STDs can lead to serious – even life-threatening – conditions, your clinician may suggest you get treated without waiting for test results.

### But I don't have any symptoms!

It's good that you don't have symptoms – they are no fun. But it doesn't mean you are free from infection. Many people who are infected have no idea anything is wrong. Meanwhile, they can pass the STD on to others and can suffer serious damage to their reproductive system.

### So what do I do now?

Go to your doctor, health center or public health clinic and tell them you may have been exposed to an STD. Ask the person who gave you this brochure to help you identify the choices available. *If you go to the same provider who treated your partner, all information will still be kept confidential.* Your information stays private to you; your partner's information stays private to him/her.

To avoid reinfection, **don't have sex** until both of you have finished all the medications!

### What kind of tests are we talking about?

Some require a blood sample, some require an examination. Each STD has its own test, so be sure to tell your clinician which STD you may have. Since people sometimes have more than one STD at a time, your clinician should test you for several STDs at the same visit.

Because having an STD can put you at a higher risk for getting infected with HIV, it is a good idea to have an HIV test, too. Talk to your doctor or clinician about being tested for HIV.

### I can't believe this is happening to me!

**You are not alone.** One in three sexually active people will have an STD by the time they are 24. Many of them find out because someone tells them, "I've been to the clinic and had a positive test. You should be tested, too."

It is almost always upsetting. People can feel frightened, embarrassed, or just numb. It is easy to be angry with your partner. It may be useful to remember that your partner told you – or made sure the health department could tell you – because he or she was concerned about your health. That took a lot of courage.

It is important to remember that just because your partner was tested first doesn't mean he or she had the infection first. There is usually no way of knowing who gave it to whom.