

5.4: STD/STI Prevention

How to Prevent STDs

Every year, there are an estimated 20 million new STD infections in the United States.

Anyone who is sexually active can get an STD. Some groups are disproportionately affected by STDs:

- Adolescents and Young Adults
- Gay, Bisexual, & other Men who have Sex with Men
- Some Racial and Ethnic Minorities

The Good News: STDs ARE preventable. There are steps you can take to keep yourself and your partner(s) healthy.

Here's How You Can Avoid (or reduce the risk of) Giving or Getting an STD:

Practice Abstinence

The surest way to avoid STDs is to not have sex. This means not having vaginal, oral, or anal sex.

Use Condoms

Using a condom correctly every time you have sex can help you avoid STDs. Condoms lessen the risk of infection for all STDs.

You still can get certain STDs, like herpes or HPV, from contact with your partner's skin even when using a condom.

Most people say they used a condom the first time they ever had sex, but when asked about the last 4 weeks, less than a quarter said they used a condom every time.

Have Fewer Partners

Agree to only have sex with one person who agrees to only have sex with you. Make sure you both get tested to know for sure that neither of you has an STD. This is one of the most reliable ways to avoid STDs.



Get Vaccinated

The most common STD can be prevented by a vaccine. The HPV vaccine is safe, effective, and can help you avoid HPV-related health problems like genital warts and some cancers.

Who should get the HPV vaccine?

- Routine vaccination for boys & girls ages 11 to 12

Catch-up vaccination for:

- Young women ages 13 to 26 and young men ages 13 to 21
- Gay, Bisexual, & other Men who have sex with Men up to age 26
- Men with compromised immune systems up to age 26

Talk With Your Partner

Talk with your sex partner(s) about STDs and staying safe before having sex. It might be uncomfortable to [start the conversation](#), but protecting your health is your responsibility.

Get Tested

Many STDs don't have symptoms, but they can still cause health problems.

- [Talk with your health care provider](#)
- [Search for CDC recommended tests](#)
- [Find a location to get tested for STDs](#)

The only way to know for sure if you have an STD is to get tested.

If You Test Positive...

Getting an STD is not the end! Many STDs are curable and all are treatable. If either you or your partner is infected with an STD that can be cured, both of you need to start treatment immediately to avoid getting re-infected.

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