

# GET YOURSELF TALKING ABOUT STD TESTING



## Talking with Your Partner

Getting tested is a lot easier to talk about if you know what you're talking about. First off, know that STDs are really common and most people who have one don't know it – the only way to know is to GYT (Get Yourself Tested). So if you know you have one, there is a lot you can do to not pass it along. And the sooner you get yourself treatment, the better things will be for you and your partner.

Talking about STDs and testing can protect you and your partner. It's also a good way to learn more about your partner and your relationship: Is your partner willing to talk about this? Does he or she respect what you want?

## Here are some tips on how to get yourself talking with your partner:

### Before you talk

- Read up at GYTNOW.org. Learn everything you can about STDs before you get talking. Knowing the facts gives you confidence and will definitely help you answer any questions your partner might have.

### Know what you want from the conversation

- Come to the conversation with a goal – knowing what you want to get out of it will make things go a lot smoother. Your goal could be that you'd like to get tested together.
- Making your goal clear up front will help kick off the conversation.

### If you think it will be hard to talk, figure out why

- Feeling embarrassed or nervous? Is it something more? Some people worry that partners will assume talking about STDs means they have an STD. Other people may worry that their partner will reject them. In a healthy relationship, you can talk about anything, including STDs and testing, without worrying that it will lead to a breakup or big fight.
- Know that you are doing the right thing by talking about testing.

### Time it right

- Anytime can be the right time. But it is probably better to bring up STDs and testing when you have time and privacy (and you're fully dressed), so there's nothing to distract you.

- Write down your thoughts beforehand to help you figure out what you want to say.
- Practice what you're going to say out loud, in front of a mirror, or with a trusted friend.
- Look up where to get tested in your area so you can suggest that you Get Yourselves Tested (GYT) together. Text your zip code to GYTNOW (498669) to find a nearby clinic.

### Bring it up

- Don't wait for your partner to bring up getting tested.
- Someone has to do it, right? So just say "GYT."
- If you feel awkward, just say so.
- Tell your partner that you want to get tested for STDs together.
  - Try saying something like
    - "I'm kind of nervous to put this out there ... but I think it's important that we go get tested together"; OR
    - "I heard that 1 in 2 sexually active people in the U.S. will get an STD by age 25 – and most won't even know it. The only sure way for us to know is to get tested."
- You might be surprised – your partner will probably feel relieved that you brought it up.

### Keep in mind

- Talking with your partner is the first step to taking control of your sexual health.
- Anyone can get an STD – even people who have only had one partner.
- It is possible that you or your partner got an STD from an earlier relationship, without even knowing it. So suggesting that you get tested together is not a sign that you think he or she is cheating. It is also not a sign that you have been cheating.
- Remind your partner that you are having this conversation because you care – and so you can both stay healthy.
- If your partner refuses to talk about getting tested, you may want to rethink whether you want to have a relationship with this person.

# GET YOURSELF TALKING ABOUT STD TESTING cont...



## Discussing Your Results

### If your results come back negative

That's great news! Share your results with your partner. And remember to keep using condoms each and every time you have sex, from start to finish – even if you are using another form of birth control – since they are the only protection against both STDs and pregnancy. Also, you should continue to see a health care provider for regular checkups and get tested as recommended.

### If your results come back positive

- Be sure to follow up with all treatment and appointments recommended by your health care provider.
- Be honest with your partner about your results. He or she may be infected and need treatment, too.
- If you've been given treatment for an STD, remember to avoid having sex until both you and your partner have been treated and cured.

If you've had sex with other partners in the past two-to-three months, they should also be notified since they may be infected and need to see a health care provider.

Telling a partner about an STD can be a hard conversation to have. But there are things that can make it easier.

### Here are some tips for telling your partner you have an STD:

- Learn about the STD you have before you talk with your partner. Print out some online information to help you explain it and answer questions that your partner may have. You may be surprised to learn how common STDs are.
- Have the discussion in person, not by phone, e-mail or text...Find a time and place where you have privacy and are not rushed.
- Remind your partner that you may have been infected a long time ago from a previous partner, without knowing it. Many STDs don't show any signs but can last a long time.

- Help your partner understand that he or she may be infected, too, and should see a health care provider. It may not be possible to know which one of you had it first. The important thing is to support each other and make sure you both get treated if it turns out that you are both infected. .

Remember: Millions of people have to deal with this every year – you are not alone. Many people are happy to find out how supportive their partner can be and how this conversation can bring them closer.

### If you are in a situation where your partner tells you that he or she has an STD:

- Do your best to remain calm.
- Listen to all your partner has to say, and don't jump to conclusions about your partner's sexual history.
- Be supportive and recognize that your partner may be going through a hard time with this.
- You should consider getting tested, too, since you may have been exposed. Remember: Most STDs are curable. All are treatable.
- Consider your options for future protection there are ways to lower your risk of getting an STD from your partner.

For more information about STDs and STD testing, including what you can expect and how to talk to your health care provider about it, go to [www.GYTNOW.org](http://www.GYTNOW.org).