



FACT SHEET – 12 July 2012

HOW DO I TELL MY PARTNER THAT I HAVE AN STI?

Why should my sexual partner be told that I have a sexually transmitted disease?

If you have a sexually transmitted infection (STI), any or all of the people you had sex with (vaginal, oral, or anal sex) may also be infected with the disease. But they may not even know they are infected. By notifying them, you can help ensure they receive the medical treatment they need. Telling your partner shows you respect and care about them. Your honesty may build trust and encourage your partner to share sexual health information with you.

Telling your partner may also prevent future misunderstandings or legal action. Many people who are infected with an STI do not notice any symptoms, until they become very ill. For example, while most (though not all) men who are infected with Chlamydia or gonorrhea get symptoms within 30 days of becoming infected, most women do not. Instead, many women may not notice their infection at all, until it causes very serious problems, like pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) or infertility.

It is very important that everyone who may have been exposed to the disease gets treated. This protects people from the sometimes very serious consequences of untreated infections, and it protects their sexual partners (like you) from getting their infection.

Ensuring medical treatment for everyone exposed is the right thing to do.

Everyone benefits from the elimination of sexually transmitted infections. Your partner is treated, you are protected from re-infection if you have sex with them again (assuming they are also treated), you receive the satisfaction of knowing you have acted responsibly, and the disease burden and potential sources of infection are reduced in the community.

What does my partner need to know?

- the name of the disease they may have, or may have been exposed to,
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- the importance of seeing a doctor even if they have no symptoms of the disease,
- the importance of telling the doctor the name of the disease they may have,
(They should **not** make the doctor guess why they are there. They should **not** just ask for a “check-up”)
- the importance of acting promptly, since they may have had the infection for some time.
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How can my partners be given the information they need?

There are a few ways to go about this. You might choose a different approach for each of partner, depending on your relationships and what you feel will work best for you and for them. Your health care professional will discuss each of these with you and help you formulate a plan.





- You can tell your partner that you have the disease and they may also have it. Use the name of the disease, and emphasize that it is very important they see a doctor promptly, even if they don't think they are infected. When speaking with your partner, a caring attitude is helpful, while a blaming attitude is not. Keep in mind that your partner, even if infected, may not know it. Some people may have some sexually transmitted infections for long periods without having symptoms.
- With your permission, a trained health care professional informs your partner that someone with the disease has named them as a contact. This information is ideally shared face-to-face. The health care worker never discloses your name, but says only that a person who cares enough about them gave their name to ensure they receive appropriate care. The health care worker then helps your partner access medical treatment and testing.
- You inform your partner in the presence of the health care professional. This approach supports you and ensures your partner receives prompt and complete information and medical care.
- You could send an anonymous e-mail to your partner using <http://www.inspot.org/>. This free internet service provides your partner with factual information and sources of free or low cost testing and treatment services, while protecting your anonymity.
- If all you have is a screen name from an internet dating site, you may be able to use that websites' partner notification service, which protects your identity.
- Some local public health clinics offer the option of enabling your partner to get medicine for gonorrhea and Chlamydia without seeing a doctor ("expedited partner therapy").

Which of my partners need to know about this?

For each disease, there is a recommended interview period. Everyone you have had sex with (vaginal, anal or oral sex) during the interview period should be told that they might have been exposed.

- Chlamydia or Gonorrhea: everyone you had sex with in the previous 2 months
- Syphilis: (primary Syphilis) everyone you had sex with in the past 3 months; or (secondary Syphilis) everyone you has sex with in the past 6 months.
- HIV: everyone you had sex with in the past year or 2 years (depending on the date of your last negative HIV test).

Where can I get more information?

A health care provider should be consulted if you suspect you have a sexually transmitted infection. Your local health care provider or preventive medicine office can help you with the notification of your sexual contacts if you do have a sexually transmitted disease. CDC provides information through their National STD Hotline at (800) 227-8922.

This information was adapted by the NMCPHC Sexual Health and Responsibility Program (SHARP), from material developed by the Centers for Disease Prevention and Control including Partner Services Guidance (October 2008) and STD Treatment Guidelines 2010 (17 Dec 2010)

