

STD PARTNER NOTIFICATION

WHAT ABOUT YOUR PARTNERS?

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 to an STD can contract it 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. Partners may pass a disease back and forth before they have finished all their medication.
- STDs pass easily through the delicate lining of the mouth, vagina, penis, and rectum. Abstinence (not having sex) is the only sure way to prevent the sexual transmission of HIV and other STDs.
- If you have sex, you can reduce your risk of infection by using condoms every time. When used correctly, condoms can 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, reduce your number of partners. Know who else your partner is having sex with. Use condoms unless tests show that your partner does not have any STDs.
- If you use injecting drugs, **never** share your needle or syringe.
- Do not share or reuse cotton balls, rinse water, or other equipment.
- Never share needles for **any** reason.



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

Texas Department of State
Health Services

For HIV/STD questions, call
737-255-4300

or visit
dshs.texas.gov/hivstd

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WHY DOES MY PARTNER NEED TO KNOW?

Many people do not have symptoms until after they pass the infection on to others or develop serious health problems. People can avoid many of these problems if they know the chances of catching an STD and receive an STD test from healthcare providers. Even if your partner(s) had a check-up recently, chances are they were not tested for STDs.

Your healthcare provider or counselor can help you figure out just how long "recently" is. For HIV and hepatitis, anyone you have shared needles or works with needs to know too.

I WANT TO TELL MY PARTNER, BUT I DO NOT KNOW HOW.

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

1. **When:** Choose a time to talk with your partner when they can give you their complete attention. Allow plenty of time to explain and discuss the problem. The sooner you tell your partner, the sooner they 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 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 have no 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.

4. **What:** Make sure your partner knows what STD you are talking about! The most common STDs are chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, trichomoniasis, HIV, human papillomavirus (HPV), herpes simplex virus type 2 (HSV-2), and hepatitis B virus (HBV).
5. **What's next:** Your partner(s) needs to get tested as soon as possible. They can go to a private physician, a health center, or a public health clinic. Ask your health provider or counselor for options you can offer your partner(s). All information remains confidential.

I AM AFRAID THEY ARE GOING TO BE UPSET.

People can have a lot of different emotions when they think they may have an STD. People can experience anger, fear, disengagement, shame, or embarrassment. You know your partner. How do they usually deal with bad news?

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

Whatever happens, remember two important points:

1. You cannot control your partner's response, but you can control your own behavior. You can stay calm even if your partner does not.
2. Understand it may be difficult. If you want help, contact a public health provider. The health department can help notify anyone who may have been exposed and may be infected with an STD. Call 2-1-1 for a health department near you.

WHAT ARE COMMON QUESTIONS MY PARTNER MAY HAVE?

"Am I positive?" or "Do I have it?"

"Possibly. There is no way to know until you get tested."

"Are you saying you got this from me?"

"I don't know who had this first. I only know that I tested positive and we had sex. That means you should get tested."

"How is this possible? I've only been with you."

"I don't know. Either of us could have had this without knowing it, making it hard to pin down where it came from."

"I don't have anything. I feel fine. What now?"

"I'm glad you feel fine, but that doesn't mean nothing is going on. I care about you and I want you to be okay. The only way to be sure is to get tested."

YOU ARE NOT ALONE. IN 2023:

- Almost half (48.2percent) of reported cases of chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis (all stages) were among adolescents and young adults aged 15–24 years.
- Over 2.4 million cases of syphilis, gonorrhea, and chlamydia were diagnosed and reported in Texas. This includes over 209,000 cases of syphilis, over 600,000 cases of gonorrhea, and over 1.6 million cases of chlamydia. Importantly, the combined count includes 3,882 cases of congenital syphilis, including 279 congenital syphilis stillbirths and neonatal or infant deaths.
- More than 210,000 Texans received a positive STD diagnosis from a health professional.

You did not create this infection. It happened to someone else before it happened to you.