

WHAT IF I HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO AN STD?

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 can 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. 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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Stock No. 4-214
Revised January 2026



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WHAT IF I HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO A SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASE (STD)?

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

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

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EXPOSED AND INFECTED?

If someone close to you has a cold, chances are they exposed you to it when they coughed or sneezed. You may or may not "catch" the cold. If you start having symptoms, then you have a cold. Your friend infected you.

With STDs, if you have sex with someone who has an STD, they have exposed you to that STD. It is important to get tested immediately. Many people with STDs do not know they have an STD. Healthcare providers can usually do simple tests to see if you have an STD.

OKAY, AM I INFECTED?

The only way to know if you have an STD is to get a reliable test. Because different STDs need different tests and treatments, ask your doctor to test you for all STDs. Because having an STD puts you at a higher risk of contracting HIV, it is a good idea to have an HIV test, too.

Untreated STDs can lead to serious, life-threatening conditions. Your doctor may suggest you get treated without waiting for test results.

You can ask your doctor about DoxyPeP to prevent syphilis, gonorrhea, and chlamydia.

BUT I DO NOT HAVE ANY SYMPTOMS!

STDs often have no symptoms but can cause serious health problems.

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. Call 2-1-1 for a public provider near you.

I CANNOT BELIEVE THIS IS HAPPENING TO ME!

You are not alone. More than 186,000 Texans received a positive STD diagnosis from a health professional in 2024.

Many people find out because someone tells them, "I've been to the clinic and had a positive test. You should get tested, too."

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.

It is important to remember that just because your partner tested first does not mean they had the infection first. There is usually no way of knowing who gave it to whom.

