

How to Talk to Your Partner

Talking about STDs can be difficult. *However, the most important thing you can do with your partner before having sex is to have this conversation while you are both sober and in a good mood.* So, if you're feeling a sexual attraction towards your partner, now is the time for the discussion. If you wait until after you have sex, you haven't protected yourself or your partner, and it can make it more difficult to have this important conversation. What should you do?

Here are some suggestions:

- Remember that STDs are a *medical* issue, like the flu or chickenpox. Sometimes if you think of it as a medical issue, it can make it easier to discuss.
- Research the topic, prepare. The more facts you have, the easier it will be to discuss from a non-emotional viewpoint.
- Plan what to say. There's nothing wrong in practicing your approach.
- Know what you want—ultimately what is the end result you're seeking from having this conversation?
- While social networking might encourage the use of e-mail and texting, this is an important conversation to have in person.
- Timing is everything— choose the right time to discuss this privately. You *don't* want to start the conversation in the heat of the moment or after you've had sex, or when you are under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs. You also don't want to discuss this when you're surrounded by people. Choose a quiet, safe place.
- If your partner becomes defensive, remind your partner of how much you care about him/her and you, as well as each other's health. Recognize that this can be difficult for him/her to discuss.
- Don't let the discussion become an interrogation of you and your partner's risk factors. You might begin by naming a few of your own risk factors for HIV/AIDS/STDs and ask him/her to name a few.
- Keep the discussion non-emotional and deal in factual information. Bring articles or brochures for your partner to read.
- Ask your partner to consider going with you for STD testing before committing to sex. You can call it "a ritual of modern dating." This can make it easier for both of you to get tested.
- Share your test results with each other.

Other Informational Links:

American Social Health Association

<http://www.ashastd.org/>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<http://www.cdc.gov/STD/>

E-Cards, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<http://www2c.cdc.gov/ecards/index.asp?category=174>

Get Yourself Tested

<http://www.gytnow.org/>

National Institute of Health Medline

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/sexuallytransmitteddiseases.html>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

<http://www.womenshealth.gov/faq/sexually-transmitted-infections.cfm>

World Health Organization

http://www.who.int/topics/sexually_transmitted_infections/en/