



Sexually transmitted infections: Speaking to partners

Sexually transmitted infections involve more than one person. If you have tested positive for an infection it is more than likely your recent sexual partner also has the infection. It is important that sexual partners are informed so they can get tested and treated. This may help reduce the spread of infections and gives people the opportunity to take of their own health.

If you are worried about telling your partner, the health advisers can support you with this and help you figure out the best way to let them know. You can contact them yourself or ask the health advisers to contact partners. The health advisers provide a confidential and non-judgemental service.

Some untreated infections can cause serious medical problems and can also make people more vulnerable to picking up other infections. Early diagnosis and treatment is important. The sooner someone knows the better.

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I tell them?

There is no easy way to do this and it is normal to feel anxious about this. People often worry about being judged or blamed. Often it may appear worse in your head than actually doing it. It helps to be well informed about the infection, how it is passed on and how it is treated. Honest and direct conversation is best. It shows that you respect and care about their health. Plus it gives them the opportunity to make choices about their health.

- In most cases you will not know who infected who so try not to blame anyone. Try simply saying, 'Since we had sex I have been diagnosed with (an STI) and so I think you should get a check-up too.'
- Be clear that they may not have an STI and that you are informing them because it is a possibility.
- They may think that if they had an infection they would know. Let them know that many people can have an STI without symptoms.
- They are likely to ask what you have been diagnosed with. If you don't want to tell them, contacting them directly probably isn't the right method for you.
- Give them the details of the sexual health clinic where they can get tested (insert link). You might also want to let them know what infection you have and how it is treated. (the clinic can give you a leaflet for them or you can find this information here –insert link)

Which partners need to know?

Who to contact will vary, depending on what infection you have been diagnosed with. It also depends on whether you have symptoms or not. The health advisers will be able to help you with this.

My partner had a negative screen in the past. Do they need a repeat screen?

If your partner has had sex with you or someone else since their last negative screen it is possible they also have a sexually transmitted infection. Not all infections have symptoms so it could be there without their knowledge. The best way to protect both yourself and your partner is for both of you to get tested. If you still have questions about this the health adviser can assist you.

What if we used a condom during sex?

Condoms are the most effective method to protect you and your partner from sexually transmitted infections. However some infections can be passed on through oral sex or if there is sexual contact before the condom is used. If one partner has tested positive for a sexually transmitted infection despite using a condom it is probably best to get the other partner treated for complete peace of mind. If you have more questions about this the health advisers will be able to help.

My partner does not have any symptoms?

It is possible to have an infection without having any symptoms. A full sexual health screen is the only way to be completely sure there is no infection present.

I am worried they will judge me.

Most people would want their sexual partners to tell them if they have been diagnosed with an infection. It gives them the opportunity to do something about their own health. By informing your partners it shows that you are taking responsibility for your own health and theirs. If you are well informed about the infection and how it is passed on you can help to educate your partner.

More Information

If you would like more information on sexually transmitted infections go to:

<http://www.sexualhealthni.info/sexually-transmitted-infections-stis>

Or contact our HIV & Sexual Health Services team: