

# SEXUAL HEALTH

Tips from the *Take Charge of Your Health!* series



## TESTING RESOURCES:

### At Fenway 1340:

- For STI testing, call 617.267.0159 to make an appointment with your provider.
- HIV testing can be done as part of a medical visit at your request.
- Check our website [www.fenwayhealth.org](http://www.fenwayhealth.org) for dates and times of our walk-in clinic.

### At Fenway: South End

- Rapid HIV testing can be done as part of a medical visit at your request.
- Free HIV testing by appointment by calling 617.267.0159

### At Sidney Borum:

- For HIV testing, call 617.457.8140

### Additional testing services:

[www.hivtest.org](http://www.hivtest.org)

CDC search engine for STI and HIV testing clinics

Visit [yourhealthboston.org](http://yourhealthboston.org) for more information.

## WHAT TO EXPECT FOR TESTING:

### STI:

- Gonorrhea and Chlamydia are tested through urine or culture swab of the throat, genital or anal area.
- Syphilis is tested through blood draw.

### HIV:

- Blood testing
  - Blood is taken and sent to a lab to test for HIV antibodies.
  - The test is highly accurate, although there is a waiting period during processing of lab specimen.
  - There is a 2-week “window period” after initial transmission where it might not detect infection.
- Rapid testing
  - Either finger stick for blood draw or oral swab specimen can be processed in a 20 minute period.
  - This is the most common way to be tested.
  - There is a 6-week-3 month “window period” after initial transmission where the test might not detect infection.



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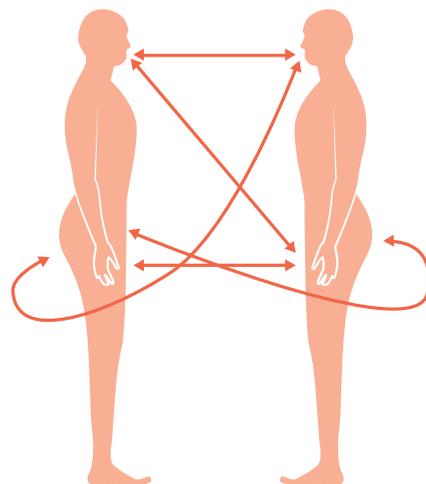
**SEX:** ANY SEXUAL ACTIVITY INVOLVING THE GENITALS, ANUS, MOUTH, HANDS AND/OR OTHER BODY PARTS.

## SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS AND HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

### HIERARCHY OF RISK OF TRANSMISSION (FROM LOW-HIGH):

Each STI has its own most efficient transmission route, but there are general methods of transmission that apply to most STIs.

- LOW RISK** Deep kissing
- Giving/receiving oral sex
- Sharing sex toys
- Insertive unprotected vaginal sex
- Insertive unprotected anal sex
- Receptive unprotected vaginal sex
- HIGH RISK** Receptive unprotected anal sex



### HIV

**What is it?** Human Immunodeficiency Virus.

**Method of transmission:** Blood, semen, vaginal secretions, pre-cum, breast milk

### Gonorrhea and Chlamydia

**What are they?** A bacterial infection

**Method of transmission:** Exchange of secretions

### Syphilis

**What is it?** A bacterial infection

**Method of transmission:** Exposure to infected skin or an active sore

### Herpes

**What is it?** A viral infection caused by one of two strains: HSV-1, or more commonly HSV-2

**Method of transmission:** Exposure to infected skin or an active sores or secretions

### HPV

**What is it?** Human papillomavirus (HPV)

**Method of transmission:** Exposure to infected skin during sex

### Hepatitis

**What is it?** Three types of viral infections: Hepatitis A (HAV), Hepatitis B (HBV), Hepatitis C (HCV)

**Method of transmission:** HAV: contact with fecal matter from a HAV+ person HBV: blood, bodily fluids, shared drug injection equipment HCV: blood

### STEPS TO REDUCE RISK:

- Get the HPV vaccination. Make sure you are up-to-date with cancer screening (“Pap test”, “HPV test”) to detect changes made by HPV.
- Get vaccinated against Hepatitis A and B. Don’t share drug injection equipment. Wash hands before and after drug preparation.
- Talk with your partners about risk.
- Negotiate use of barriers with partners to protect both of you (external condoms, internal condoms, dental dams, gloves, etc.)
- Barriers are especially important for higher risk activities.
- Wash sex toys or use barriers when switching between partners or body parts. Most non-porous (glass, stainless steel, hard plastic, silicone) materials can be cleaned with soap and water. When in doubt, follow instructions from the manufacturer.
- Communicate and set clear boundaries with your partners about what behaviors are okay and what might make you uncomfortable.
- If you or your partners can get pregnant, talk about reliable contraception.
- Get tested annually regardless of whether you have symptoms.

Many people with a sexually transmitted infection experience no signs or symptoms. That is why regular testing is the only way to know for sure. See a provider right away if you experience any of the following: unusual genital discharge, pain during sex or urination, sores, blisters, warts or rashes in the genital area.

It is just as important to talk about pleasure with your partners as it is to discuss risk. Some conversation starters when talking about pleasure might include:

- Can you touch me \_\_\_\_?
- I think it’s hot when you do \_\_\_\_\_ to me.
- I need you to \_\_\_\_\_.
- Would you like it if I \_\_\_\_?
- I like it when \_\_\_\_\_.
- Are you into this?
- I don’t like it when \_\_\_\_.
- Are you still with me?