

How Can I Talk with My Health Care Provider about Sexual Health?

How do I bring up the topic?

Talking about your sexual health might make you feel uncomfortable or embarrassed. However, if you talk openly and honestly with your provider about your body and concerns, he or she can give you better care and advice. You have the right to get full and accurate information about sexual health. And, remember, it is your provider's job to help you take care of your whole body.

Ways you could start the conversation are:

"I just saw an article about high rates of sexually transmitted infections. What can I do to protect myself?"

"I know I'm here to get a check-up, but can we talk about my sexual health for a few minutes? I have some questions."

"I'm in a new relationship, and I'm not sure about the best ways to protect myself from infections and getting pregnant."

What kinds of questions should I ask?

The questions you might ask can cover a range of topics, including: the best forms of contraception, STI screening and treatment, preventing STIs, protecting your fertility, and issues related to sexual functioning or performance.

Sample questions you might ask during your visit:

Screening and Testing

- What tests are you giving me?
- How are they done?
- When and how will I get my results?

Sexually Transmitted Infections

- Based on my history, should I be tested for STIs, including HIV? Which ones?
- How often should I be tested for STIs?
- Should my partner get tested, too?
- Are there any vaccines I should get to protect myself from STIs?
- How can I protect myself from getting STIs?
- If I have an STI, can it be treated?

Contraceptives

- What are the most effective forms of birth control?
- What are the best options for me?
- What are the side effects of different contraceptives?
- How and where can I get affordable contraceptives?

Partner Issues

- I want my partner and I to get tested for STIs before we have sex for the first time. How should I bring up the topic?
- How do I tell my partner if I test positive for an STI?
- What if my partner doesn't want to use a condom?
- I'm married and I assume my spouse is only having sex with me. Should I still be tested for STIs?
- My partner cheated on me and I'm worried I might have an STI. Which STIs should I be tested for?

Sexual Functioning or Performance

- I no longer find sex (or masturbation) pleasurable. Why?
- My sex drive is lower than normal. What's the deal?
- Having sex hurts. What's the problem?
- I'm being treated for another illness or disease, and I'm wondering how that will affect my sex life?
- I'm having trouble getting an erection/reaching climax. What's going on?
- I was told my prostate is enlarged. Will this affect my sex life?

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