

# Sexually Transmitted Infections: Getting Tested

## What are STIs?

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) are infections that you may get from having sex with someone who already has one. There are many kinds of STIs. Some common STIs include chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, genital herpes, HPV (the virus that causes genital warts), and HIV (the virus that causes AIDS).

Some STIs are curable and will go away if you get treated. Others may not go away, but you may feel better with treatment. It is important to get tested and treated as soon as you can.

## Should I get tested?

Anyone who is having sex can get an STI. Most people who have an STI don't know they have it because there are no signs or symptoms. The only way to know for sure is to get tested. It's a good idea to get tested if you have:

- ◆ Pain or burning when you pee.
- ◆ Pain when you have sex.
- ◆ An unusual discharge from the penis or vagina.
- ◆ Pain or burning around the penis, vagina, or anus.

You should also get tested if:

- ◆ Someone you have sex with has signs or symptoms of an STI.
- ◆ You had sex with someone new and did not use a condom.
- ◆ You are having sex with more than one person without using a condom.
- ◆ You suspect that someone you are having sex with is having sex with someone else.

## What can I expect?

Your Family PACT provider might suggest tests that include:

- ◆ A urine test.
- ◆ A blood test.
- ◆ Swabs of the penis, vagina, or cervix.

These tests will be either done at your provider's office or sent away to a lab.

If you have an STI, your Family PACT provider may:

- ◆ Give you a shot or pill to take right away.
- ◆ Give you a prescription to fill.
- ◆ Ask you to come back for treatment when the lab tests come back.
- ◆ Ask you to come back for follow-up tests.
- ◆ Refer you to another health care provider for additional tests or treatment.

Your provider may tell you that your sexual partner(s) should be tested and treated.

## **What happens if I don't get tested and treated?**

If you have an STI and leave it untreated:

- ◆ You could spread it to other people, even your unborn baby.
- ◆ You could end up not being able to have children later on.
- ◆ You may have a higher chance of getting HIV.
- ◆ You could have long term health problems, including liver problems and cancer.

Some STIs, like HIV, can even cause death if left untreated.

Getting tested and treated can help prevent all that.

# Protect yourself from STIs.

Here are the basics when it comes to preventing STIs:

- ◆ You can choose not to have any kind of sex involving the penis, vagina, mouth, or anus. That is the only sure way to prevent STIs.
- ◆ If you choose to have sex, use a condom every time. You can use either a male or female condom. Make sure they are made of latex or polyurethane.
- ◆ Have sex only with one person who only has sex with you.
- ◆ If you have an STI, get treated right away. Follow the advice of your Family PACT provider.