

Normalizing Chlamydia Screening

How to Talk to Teens and Young Adults

Open and honest communication is the key to making sure your patient has the information they need to protect themselves.

Create a non-judgmental and safe environment.

- Start by expressing your concern for their well-being and let them know that you are there to support them
- Encourage your patient to ask questions and assure them that you will provide accurate information
- Let them know that their sexual health information will be kept confidential and that they can trust you to respect their privacy
- Encourage them to speak openly with their health care provider about any concerns or questions they may have about chlamydia or other sexually transmitted infections (STIs)

Educate—what is chlamydia and how it is transmitted?

- Chlamydia is a bacterial infection that is spread through sexual contact, including vaginal, anal, and oral sex
- It is one of the most common STIs in the U.S., especially among teenagers and young adults
- It is often referred to as a “silent” infection because many people who have it do not experience any symptoms—this is why regular screening is crucial
- If left untreated, chlamydia can lead to serious health problems, like pelvic inflammatory disease in women and infertility in both men and women
- Address any misconceptions or myths they may have heard about chlamydia
- Provide reputable third-party websites (i.e. [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov), stdhub.org) and encourage them to do their own research



Discuss the screening process and follow-up care.

- Review the CDC's guidelines that all sexually active people with a cervix who are younger than 25 years should be screened annually for chlamydia
- Explain to them that it is a simple urine test which can be completed during their annual well-woman visit (usually conducted by a Gynecologist) or annual well-care visit (usually conducted by their Primary Care Provider)
- If your patient has not completed their annual well-woman or well-care visit, help schedule their appointment and address any social barriers to care like transportation, childcare, school/work, or anxiety
- During the visit, the provider will talk to them about where the test results should be sent and whether they would like to include their caregiver(s) **if their test result is positive**
- If your patient is under the age of 18, let them know that they don't have to include their caregiver(s); however, it's very important that your patient provides their direct contact number so that the provider can contact them directly and, if there is a positive result, treat them without having to inform their caregiver(s)
- In the case of a positive result, sexual partners must also be tested and treated to prevent reinfection
- Let your patient know that chlamydia is treated and cured with antibiotics—while the infection usually clears up within one to two weeks, your patient should abstain from sexual contact to help avoid spread

Discuss the importance of regular STI testing and safe sex practices.

- If at any time your patient thinks they've been exposed to chlamydia, or any other STI, advise them to visit their doctor or clinic for testing as soon as possible
- Help schedule their appointment and address any social barriers to care like transportation, childcare, school/work, or anxiety
- Remind them that using condoms consistently and correctly can help reduce the risk of contracting chlamydia and other STIs
- Talk to them about healthy relationships and boundaries, and that they should communicate openly with their partner(s) about their sexual health and to practice mutual respect and consent in their relationships

Notes: