



# SHARP FACTS

## How do I tell my partner...?



### Why should my sexual partner be told that I have a sexually transmitted disease?

If you have a sexually transmitted disease, any or all of the people you had sex with (vaginal, oral, or anal sex) may also be infected with the disease. But they may not even know they are infected. By notifying them, you can help ensure they receive the medical treatment they need. Telling your partner shows you respect and care about them. Your honesty may build trust and may encourage your partner to share sexual health information with you. Telling your partner may also prevent future misunderstandings or legal action. Many people who are infected with an STD do not notice any symptoms, until they become very ill. For example, while most (though not all) men who are infected with Chlamydia or gonorrhea get symptoms within 30 days of becoming infected, most women do not. Instead, many women may not notice their infection at all, until it causes very serious problems, like pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) or infertility. It is very important that everyone who may have been exposed to the disease gets treated. This protects people from the sometimes very serious consequences of untreated infections, and it protects their sexual partners (like you) from getting their infection.

### Which of my partners need to know about this?

For each disease, there is a recommended contact tracing period. Anyone you have had sex with during the contact tracing period should be told that they might have been exposed. Some contact tracing periods are:

Chancroid	10 days
Chlamydia	60 days (or most recent partner if >60 days)
Genital Herpes	current sex partners
Gonorrhea	60 days (or most recent partner if >60 days)
Granuloma Inguinale	60 days
Hepatitis B, acute	within 14 days after the most recent sexual contact
Hepatitis B, chronic	No contact time period specified. Minimally, current sexual partners, needle-sharing partners and non-sexual household contacts should be offered hepatitis B vaccine.
Hepatitis C	Long-term, steady sex partners should be informed of the low but present risk of transmission and be offered counseling and testing.
HIV	<u>Back to 6 months before last negative HIV test for people who have tested negative in the past. Or, one year back</u> is a short enough period to have the greatest impact on disease transmission with most-recently-exposed partners, including current and steady partners. Some people may have a sense of when they became infected or for some other reason may be concerned about partners from further back than one year. <u>Spouses:</u> SECNACVINST 5300.30C requires that spouses of HIV positive military reservists be provided notification, counseling, and testing.
Human Papillomavirus (genital warts)	"Examination of sex partners is not necessary..." although "...sex partners...may benefit from examination to assess the presence of genital warts and other STDs." "Female sex partners of patients who have genital warts should be reminded that cytologic screening for cervical cancer is recommended for all sexually active women". (see page 56 of MMWR 51;RR-6, 10 May 2002)
PID	60 days
Pubic lice	one month
Lymphogranuloma Venereum	30 days
Nongonococcal Urethritis	60 days
Scabies	one month
Syphilis, primary	3 months, plus duration of symptoms
Syphilis, secondary	6 months, plus duration of symptoms
Syphilis, early latent	1 year
Trichomoniasis	"sex partners should be treated"

## SHARP FACTS

# How do I tell my partner...?



### Ensuring medical treatment for everyone exposed is the right thing to do.

Everyone benefits from the elimination of sexually transmitted infections. Your partner is treated, you are protected from re-infection if you have sex with them again (assuming they are also treated), you receive the satisfaction of knowing you have acted responsibly, and the disease burden and potential sources of infection are reduced in the community.

### What does my partner need to know?

- the name of the disease they may have, or may have been exposed to,
- the importance of seeing a doctor even if they have no symptoms of the disease,
- the importance of telling the doctor the name of the disease they may have,  
(They should **not** make the doctor guess why they are there. They should **not** just ask for a "check-up")
- the importance of acting promptly, since they may have had the infection for some time.

### How can my partners be given the information they need?

There are a few ways to go about this. You might choose a different approach for each of partner, depending on your relationships and what you feel will work best for you and for them. Your health care professional will discuss each of these with you and help you formulate a plan.

- Option 1, "Client referral". You inform your partner that you have the disease and they may also have it. Use the name of the disease, and emphasize that it is very important they see a doctor promptly, even if they don't think they are infected. When speaking with your partner, a caring attitude is helpful, while a blaming attitude is not. Keep in mind that your partner, even if infected, may not know it. Some people may have some sexually transmitted infections for long periods without having symptoms.
- Option 2, "Provider Referral". With your permission, a trained health care professional informs your partner that someone with the disease has named them as a contact. This information is ideally shared face-to-face. The health care worker never discloses your name, but says only that a person who cares enough about them gave their name to ensure they receive appropriate care. The health care worker then helps your partner access medical treatment and testing.
- Option 3, "Dual Referral". You inform your partner in the presence of the health care professional. This approach supports you and ensures your partner receives prompt and complete information and medical care.
- Option 4, "Contract Referral". This is really Options 1 and 2 combined. You agree to inform you partner and, if that partner does not call or visit the health care professional by a given date, then the health care professional informs your partner and arranges treatment and testing.

### Where can I get more information?

A health care provider should be consulted if you suspect you have a sexually transmitted disease. Your local health care provider or preventive medicine office can help you with the notification of your sexual contacts if you do have a sexually transmitted disease. CDC provides information through their National STD Hotline at (800) 227-8922. For further information regarding your sexual health, visit the Sexual Health and Responsibility Program Home Page at <http://www-nehc.med.navy.mil/hp/sharp>.

This information was adapted by the Sexual Health and Responsibility Program (SHARP), Directorate of Health Promotion and Population Health, Navy Environmental Health Center, from material developed by the National Center for HIV, STD and TB Prevention, Centers for Disease Prevention and Control, Partner Counseling and Referral Services Guidance (December 1998) and STD Guidelines for Treatment of STDs 2002 (MMWR 51:RR-6, May 10, 2002).