

DRIVING **CHANGE2023**
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Sexual Health and Wellness Communication

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Objectives

- Define sexual health and wellness topics
- Discuss sexual health communication barriers
- Review tips for discussing sexual health
- Review tips for discussing sexually transmitted infections
- Ideas to implement

Sexual Health and Wellness Topics

Sexual Health Topics

- Infectious Disease

- Hepatitis
- HIV/AIDS
- Sexually Transmitted Infections

- Reproductive Health

- Contraceptive Use
- Reproductive Health
- Pregnancy/Birth
- Women's Health

- Sexual Practices

- Partners
- Activities

- Adolescent Health

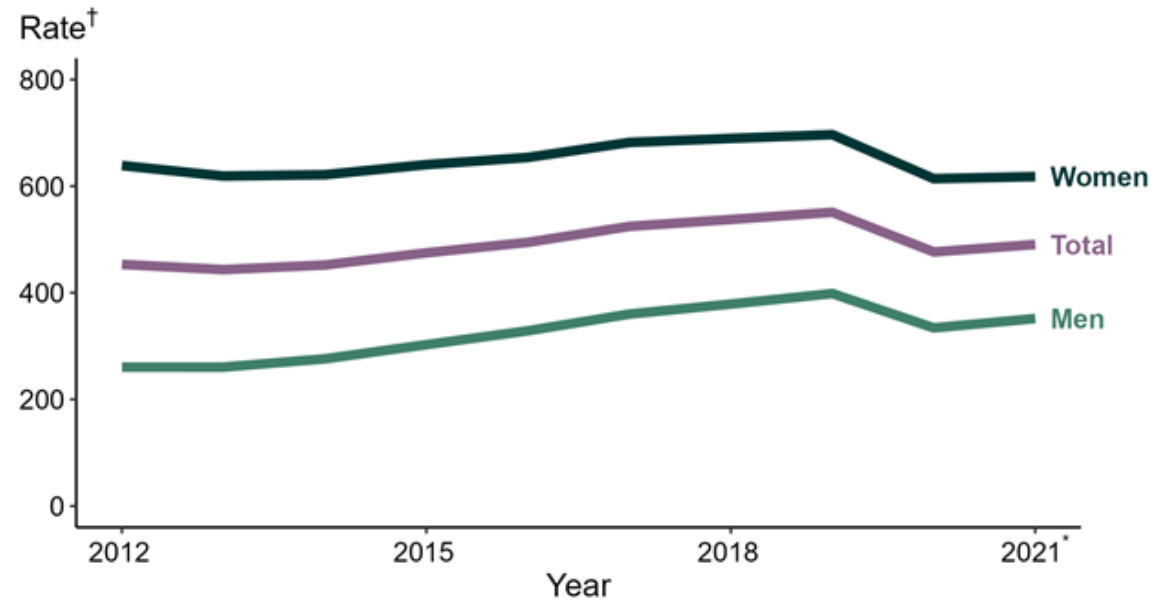
- Sexual Risk Behavior
- Teen Pregnancy

- Sexual Violence

- Intimate Partner Violence
- Rape

Sexually Transmitted Infections

Chlamydia — Rates of Reported Cases by Sex, United States, 2012–2021*



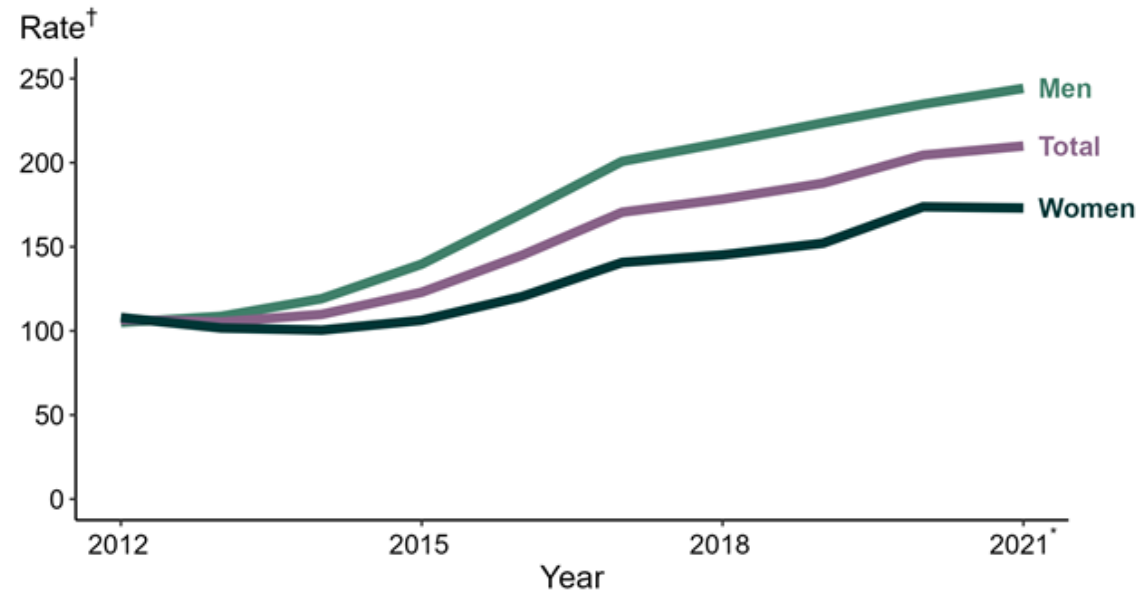
* Reported 2021 data are preliminary as of July 7, 2022

† Per 100,000



Sexually Transmitted Infections

Gonorrhea — Rates of Reported Cases by Sex, United States, 2012–2021*



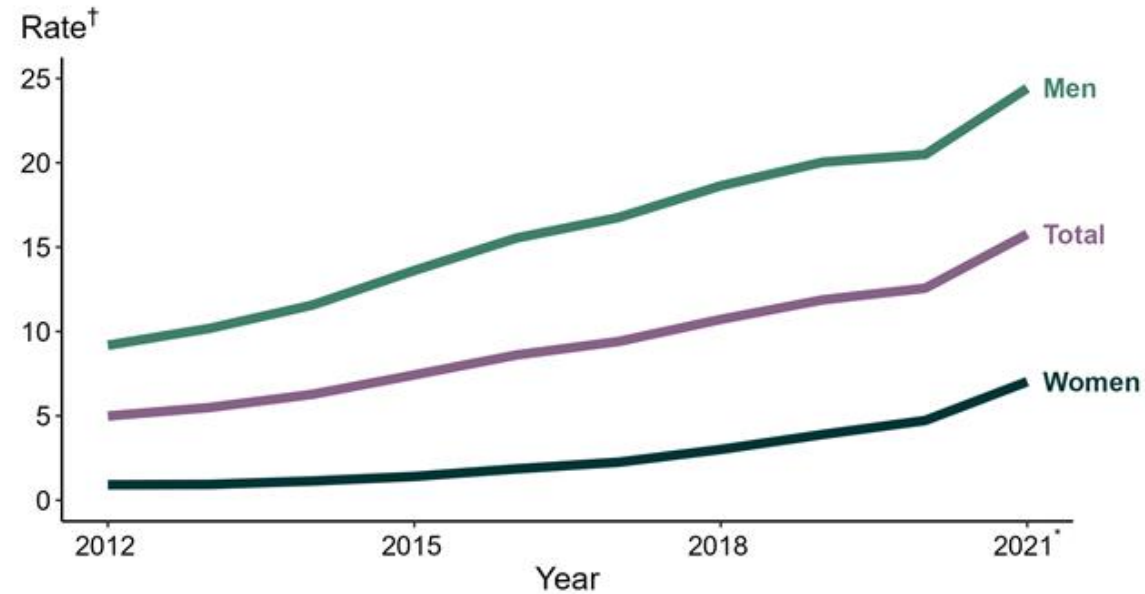
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† Per 100,000



Sexually Transmitted Infections

Primary and Secondary Syphilis — Rates of Reported Cases by Sex, United States, 2012–2021*

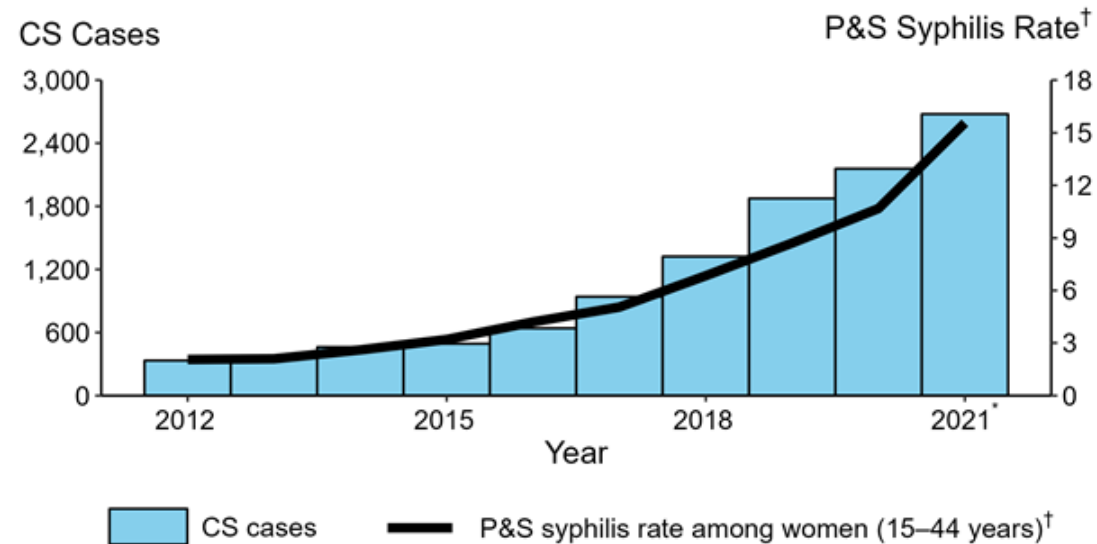


* Reported 2021 data are preliminary as of July 7, 2022

† Per 100,000



Congenital Syphilis — Reported Cases by Year of Birth and Rates of Reported Cases of Primary and Secondary Syphilis Among Women Aged 15–44 Years, United States, 2012–2021*



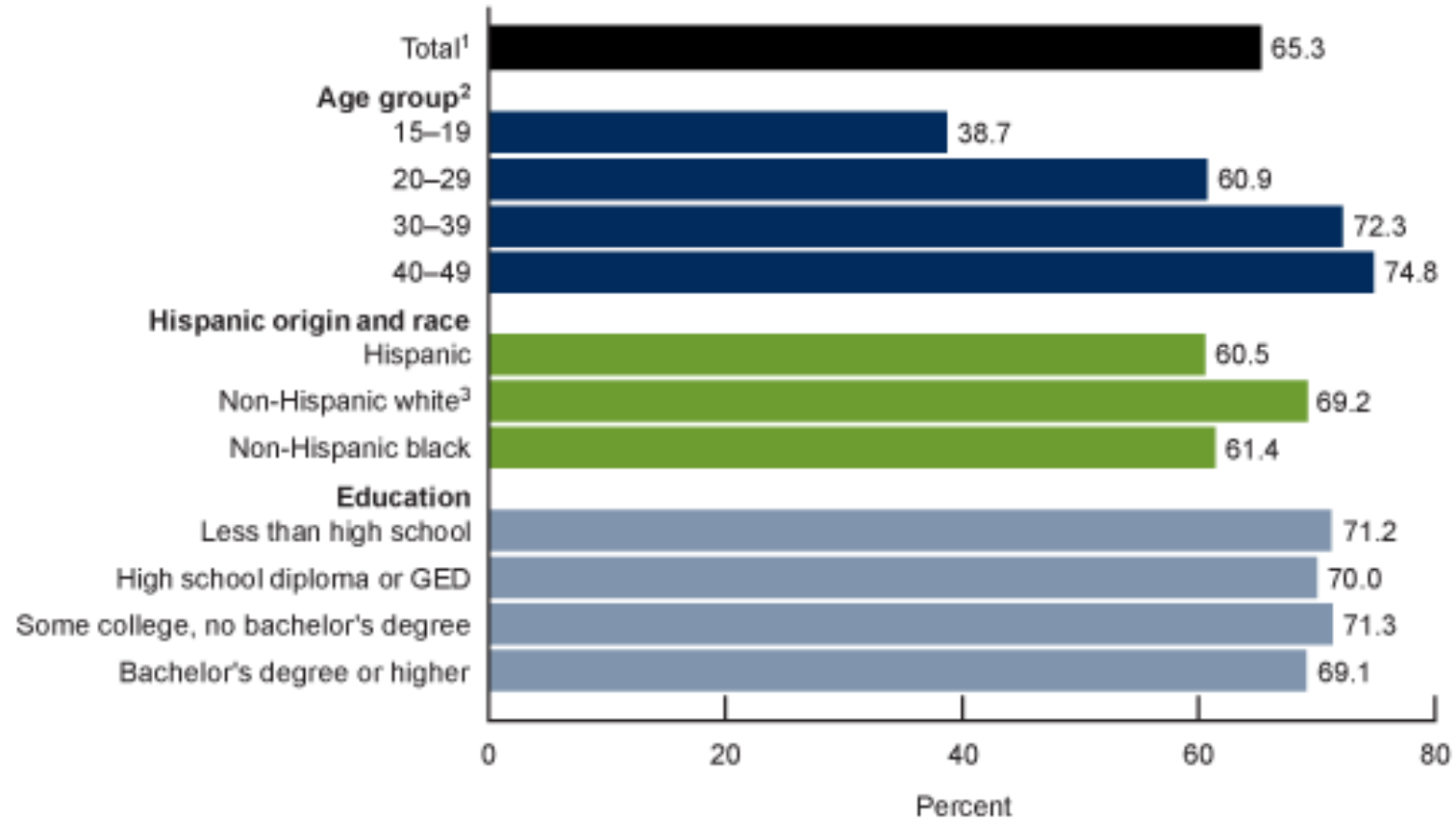
* Reported 2021 data are preliminary as of July 7, 2022

† Per 100,000

ACRONYMS: CS = Congenital syphilis; P&S = Primary and secondary syphilis



Contraceptive Use



Sexual Practices

- Sexual Partners

- Men
- Women
- Both
- Transgender

- Sexual Activities

- Vaginal
- Anal
- Oral
- Toys
- Use of Protection
- Use of Birth Control

Adolescent Sexual Practices

Among U.S. **high school students** surveyed in 2019¹

- 38% had ever had sexual intercourse.
- 9% had four or more sexual partners.
- 7% had been physically forced to have sexual intercourse when they did not want to.
- 27% had had sexual intercourse during the previous 3 months, and, of these
 - 46% did not use a condom the last time they had sex.
 - 12% did not use any method to prevent pregnancy.
 - 21% had drunk alcohol or used drugs before last sexual intercourse.
- Less than 10% of all students have ever been tested for HIV.
- Less than 10% of all students have been tested for sexually transmitted diseases during the past year.
- Increased risk for LGBTQIA+

Source: *National Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2019*

Sexual Violence

More than **1 in 3**
women experienced
sexual violence involving
physical contact during
her lifetime.



Nearly **1 in 4**
men experienced sexual
violence involving
physical contact during
his lifetime.



Estimated Lifetime
Cost of Rape



\$122,461
per victim

Communication Barriers

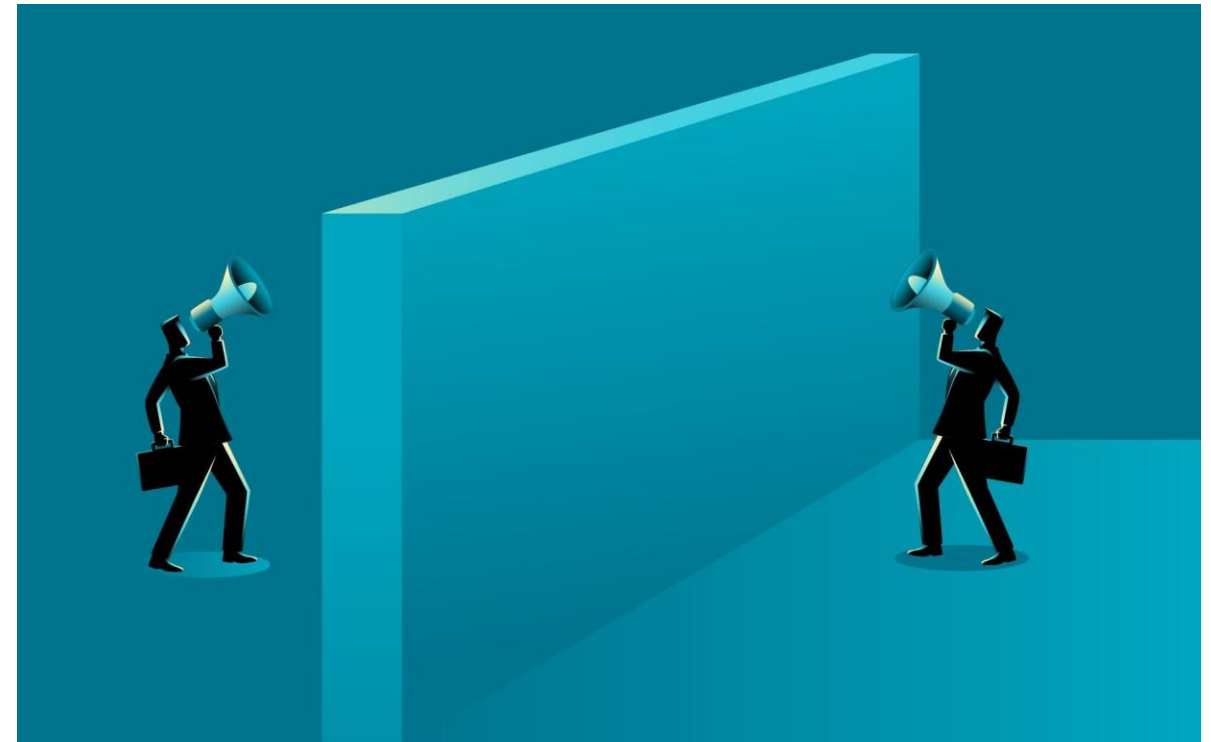
Patient Barriers

- Feelings of shame
- Fear of judgement
- Sexuality should not be discussed
- Physician does not have the time or is not interested
- Beliefs that there are not treatments
- Cultural concerns
- Health equity concerns
- Adolescents – concern that parents will find out



Staff/Provider Barriers

- Creates too much closeness with patient
- Take too much time
- Concern for offending the patient
- Lack of training on communication
- Lack of knowledge/awareness on how to treat
- Individual's sexual agenda
- Cultural concerns



Tips for Discussing Sexual Health

Tips for Discussing Sexual Health

- Assess your own comfort
 - Practice
 - Use nonjudgmental terminology
 - Use simple medical terms, not slang
- Make your patient feel comfortable
 - Establish rapport
 - Give introduction to sensitive questions
 - Ask professionally



Tips for Discussing Sexual Health

- Use neutral and inclusive terms
 - Use the term “partner”
 - Be non-judgmental
- Avoid assumptions
 - Don’t assume based on age, appearance, marital status, etc.
 - Ask about sexual orientation, sexual behaviors, gender identity, etc.



Tips for Discussing Sexual Health

- Try not to react overtly
 - Don't show if you feel embarrassed or uncomfortable
 - Be aware of your body language and posture
 - Non-verbal communication is as important as verbal communication
- Rephrase your questions
 - If a patient seems offended or reluctant to answer, provide an explanation
 - Rephrase the question in another way

Tips for Discussing Sexual Health

- Share understanding of terminology
 - If a patient uses a term you don't understand, ask for clarification
 - Ensure the patient understands what you are saying
- Ask for correct pronouns or terminology
 - Anatomy does not always match identity
 - Visual appearance does not always match identity
 - Utilize preferred pronouns



Examples for Non-Clinical Staff

- Front Desk Staff

- Privacy is important
- “Are you here for a personal reason that you would like to discuss directly with the provider?”

- Billing/Coding staff

- “I am calling to follow up from your urgent care visit on March 7th.”
- “I am calling regarding your recent visit for chlamydia.”
- “I am following up from your visit on Thursday with the provider for your vaginal complaint.”

Examples for Clinical Staff

- Make patient aware you are going to transition to sensitive questions
 - “I am going to ask some personal or sensitive questions regarding your sexual health now.”
- Ask any other parties to exit the room for the conversation
 - “As we are going to move into an examination, can you please step out of the room to give us some privacy?”
- Specific questions
 - “Have you been sexually active in the last year?”
 - “Do you have sex with men, women or both?”
 - “In the past three months have you had vaginal, anal, or oral sex?”

Patient-Centered Communication

- Active Listening
- Reflecting
- Summarizing



Tips for Discussing Sexually Transmitted Infections

Talking about STIs

- 51% of females 15-24 don't want to talk about sex
- 27% of females 15-24 don't tell the truth
- 25% of providers agree with the statement "I am very uncomfortable discussing STI risk with my female patients."
- 25% of sexually active adolescent females has a STI
- We aren't talking about STIs and we need to
 - Frank, direct conversations are necessary

Tips for talking about STIs

- Start with “just the facts” to lesson discomfort
 - “As I say to all my patients...(then state the facts)”
 - “there is a high prevalence of gonorrhea and chlamydia in this country.”
 - “many STIs do not have symptoms.”
 - “STIs may have negative outcomes.”
- Stress medical guidelines
 - “Due to your symptoms, I think we need to test you for gonorrhea and chlamydia”
 - “Given your age and that you are sexually active, we should also test for other infections such as HIV, syphilis, etc.”

Tips for talking about STIs

- Make it about “we” rather than “you”.
 - Acknowledge that unless you are abstinent you are at risk for STIs
 - “We are all at risk”
 - Normalize the conversation and remove judgement
- Instruct all staff to follow your lead.
 - Coordinate office staff goals, messaging and expectations
 - Ensure sensitive assessment of all patients
 - Consistent practices

Ideas to Implement

Ideas to Implement

- Staff training on communication
- Create scripting for staff
- Evaluate your space
- Design patient flow
 - Clinical care/specimens
- Post educational materials

THE LOWDOWN ON HOW TO PREVENT SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES

Practice Abstinence
The surest way to avoid STDs is to not have sex.
This means not having vaginal, oral, or anal sex.

Have Fewer Partners
Agree to only have sex with one person who agrees to only have sex with you.
Make sure you both get tested to know for sure that neither of you has an STD. This is one of the most reliable ways to avoid STDs.

Talk With Your Partner
Talk with your sex partner(s) about STDs and staying safe before having sex.
Let's both get tested together!
Why take a chance when we can know for sure?
It might be uncomfortable to start the conversation, but protecting your health is your responsibility.

Use Condoms
Using a condom correctly every time you have sex can help you avoid STDs.
Condoms lessen the risk of infection for all STDs. You still can get certain STDs, like herpes or HPV, from contact with your partner's skin even when using a condom.
Most people claimed they used a condom the first time they ever had sex, but when asked about the last 6 weeks, less than one quarter said they used a condom every time.


Get Vaccinated
The most common STD can be prevented by a vaccine.
The HPV vaccine is safe, effective, and can help you avoid HPV-related health problems like genital warts and some cancers.
Who should get the HPV vaccine?
Routine vaccination for boys & girls ages 11 to 12.
Catch-up vaccination for:
Young women from age 13 to age 26 and young men from age 15 to age 21.
Gay, bisexual, & other men who have sex with men up to age 26.
Men with compromised immune systems up to age 26.

Get Tested
Many STDs don't have symptoms, but they can still cause health problems.
Talk with your health care provider. Search for CDC recommended tests. Find a location to get tested for STDs.
The only way to know for sure if you have an STD is to get tested.

The Good News
STDs **ARE** preventable. There are steps you can take to keep yourself and your partner(s) healthy.
Here's How You Can Avoid Giving or Getting an STD:

If You Test Positive...
Getting an STD is not the end! Many STDs are curable and all are treatable. If either you or your partner is infected with an STD that can be cured, both of you need to start treatment immediately to avoid getting re-infected.

View Infographic Online at: www.cdc.gov/std/prevention/lowdown/

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- Get comfortable and normalize the conversation
 - Train all staff in sexual health communication
 - Do the right thing for the patient
 - Get the right treatment at the right time

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Session Evaluation

- Your feedback is valuable, take a moment to complete the survey for this session.
- To claim CME, you must complete a separate survey available after the convention.

* How likely are you to recommend this **content** to a colleague?

Not likely at all Neutral Extremely likely

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What did you find most valuable about this **content**?

What would have made this **content** better?

References

- [Data and Statistics about Sexual Health | CDC](#)
- [A Guide for the Healthcare Professional: DISCUSSING SEXUAL HEALTH with Your Patients \(cdc.gov\)](#)
- [The challenge of talking about sex: The importance of patient–physician interaction – ScienceDirect](#)
- [Patient-Provider Communication Barriers and Facilitators to HIV and STI Preventive Services for Adolescent MSM - PMC \(nih.gov\)](#)
- [An Assessment of Patient-Provider Communication Regarding Sexually Transmitted Infections Among Female Young Adults \(tdl.org\)](#)
- [Can we talk? Four tips to discussing STIs with patients \(physicianspractice.com\)](#)



Thank you

- Questions?
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