

Sexual Health



Embracing Health

We live in a time when casual sexual encounters can have profound health consequences, so it stands to reason the more you know about how to stay healthy, the better. Individuals in monogamous relationships also want to be sure they are listening to their bodies because your sexual health is important throughout your entire lifespan!

Start a Dialogue

My 411 Ask yourself, am I at risk for any sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)?

Talk 2 Me! Talk to your doctor. I've been with one partner for so long, I sort of forget what tests or exams I should have routinely. What do you suggest?

Embracing Women

All of our bodies have the potential to feel physical excitement and pleasure. For most women sexuality is a big part of their life experience. Sexual health means understanding your body and how it works. With this understanding comes a better ability to make healthy choices. Sexual health means being comfortable with yourself and your desires. It involves having healthy relationships with others – and knowing how to identify abusive or violent behavior so you don't become a victim.

Consider Gender Differences

My 411! Ask yourself, when was the last time I had a gynecological exam?

Talk 2 Me! Talk to your doctor. If I am sexually active, how can I tell if my partner is healthy?

Embracing Lifestyles

Taking care of yourself and staying in good health helps to keep you sexually fit as well. Adult onset diseases associated with poor diet and lack of exercise can also affect your sexual health. People with heart disease or diabetes often have specific problems that affect their sexual activity. Mental attitude is also important. Learning how to communicate openly and honestly about your sexual needs, wants, and desires with your partner(s) goes a long way to promoting your overall outlook and health throughout your life. Embracing your sexuality, whether you are straight or gay, is also very important.

Get a Handle

My 411! Ask yourself, I wonder if being overweight is affecting my outlook on sex?

Talk 2 Me! Talk to your doctor. If I am having same-sex relationships do I need to worry about the same STDs heterosexuals do?

Embracing Common Sense!

If you are sexually active and not in a

monogamous relationship, there is no alternative to safe sex. Even individuals who are married, or have only one partner need to consider the possibility their significant other may have sexual encounters with someone else. Hopefully, this is not the case, but making sure you are not exposed to STDs is important regardless of the relationship. For anyone who is single, dating, and sexually active a condom should be used whenever there is genital or oral contact.

Create Healthier Habits

My 411! Ask yourself, am I willing to risk my life simply because I am embarrassed to ask my partner to wear a condom?

Talk 2 Me! Talk to your doctor. For anyone who is sexually active, what is the best protection from STDs like HIV or AIDS?

Embracing Science

Research has found that men tend to consider the act of sex, especially orgasm, to be what love making is all about. Women, however, tend to focus more on tenderness and the quality of their emotional relationship. Culture often inhibits a woman's sexuality. A sexually promiscuous man is often looked upon as a conqueror, or sexual victor – while a promiscuous woman may be thought of and referred to in negative terms. Research has shown that there is very little difference in the way men and women become aroused by erotic stimuli. Men do tend to have more sexual fantasies. Single women who have live-in partners have more sex than their male counterparts.

Sexual Health

It's Time for Show and Tell

My 411! Ask yourself, if sex is an important part of my life, what can I do to approach my sexuality in healthy ways?

Talk 2 Me! Talk to your doctor. Several of my friends use vibrators and other devices to promote sexual pleasure. Are these safe? Are there any precautions I should use?

Possible tests for a few common STDs

Syphilis: Caused by a microscopic bacterial organism called a spirochete that is usually diagnosed through direct examination and blood tests.

Gonorrhea: A bacterial infection transmitted by sexual contact is often treated by one of the following: gram-stain using light microscopy, bacterial culture, and nucleic acid amplification test (NAATs).

Chlamydia: Found in 4 million women annually, this disease is caused by a bacteria very similar to gonorrhea. Chlamydia is commonly detected using NAATs.

Trichomonas: Secretions collected on a swab are examined under a microscope or cultured to detect the presence of *Trichomonas vaginalis*, newly developed immunoassays may also be used.

Genital herpes: This viral infection is transmitted through intimate sexual contact and is generally detected through blood tests for type specific antibodies. Cultures can also be taken from blisters during an outbreak.

Genital warts: These are wart-like bumps caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV)

★ transmitted through sexual contact. Sometimes detected on a PAP smear, and also diagnosed through biopsy.

AIDS/HIV: Acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) is a contagious infection caused by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). HIV infection weakens the body's immune system and increases the body's vulnerability to many different infections as well as to the development of certain cancers. Currently diagnosed by blood tests to measure antibodies.

Possible treatments for STDs

Only a few of the more common STDs are highlighted here. Treatment options vary depending upon diagnosis. They may be as simple as a prescription for an antibiotic, or as in the case of AIDS/HIV, a lifelong commitment to taking several medications every day in order to help keep your immune system functioning. The use of condoms can help decrease the risk of transmission of certain STDs, but they do not prevent the transmission of all diseases. For individuals who are sexually active with more than one partner, there isn't such a thing as safe sex – just safer sex. However, in the context of a monogamous relationship wherein neither party is infected, the term has more meaning. ★

My 411! Ask yourself, do I have any self-esteem issues that may make me vulnerable when it comes to picking inappropriate sexual partners?

Talk 2 Me! Talk to your doctor. How often do I need to have pelvic exams and Pap tests?

Embracing Strength

Being proud of who you are. Loving yourself, and embracing your sexuality are all important components of a healthy life in general. Sex definitely impacts the mind, body, and spirit – so make sure you remember to savor your experiences, protect yourself both physically and emotionally – and enjoy your individuality! Remember – even virgins have opportunities to explore their sexuality in healthy ways!

Simple Steps

My 411! Ask yourself, I wonder if learning how to belly dance, or taking a yoga class might be good ways for me to explore variations for tapping into my sexual energy?

Talk 2 Me! Talk to your doctor. Are there exercises that can actually help keep me more sexually healthy? ★