

TAKING A SEXUAL HISTORY

Your patients' sexual history is an important part of their overall health and wellness. Taking a sexual history will help guide the physical exam and screening of all exposed sites for sexually transmitted infections (STI), and will help you establish your patients' STI/HIV risk.

Take a sexual history from all patients.

The 5 Ps of Sexual Health

Partners

Number, gender and HIV status of partners over a given time

Practices

Types of sexual practices — oral, vaginal or front hole, and anal

Protection from STIs

Use of condoms, other barrier methods, and/or PrEP or PEP

Past History of STIs, Including HIV

Establish risk of repeat infections, HIV status and hepatitis risk. Diagnoses of gonorrhea and early syphilis are signals of increased HIV risk among women in New York City and should trigger the routine offer of PrEP.

Pregnancy

Desire for pregnancy and/or use of prevention methods

“It is important we discuss your sexual practices. I speak with all of my patients about many different aspects of their lives.”

The 5 Ps: Sample Questions

Partners

- In the past 12 months, how many sexual partners have you had? Men? Women? Both? Are any of your partners transgender or gender nonconforming?
- Do you or your current partner have other partners?

Practices

- In the past 12 months, have you had vaginal or front hole sex? Oral sex? Anal sex?
- *For men or transgender women who have sex with men:* Are you ever the receptive partner (the bottom)?

Protection from STIs

- How do you keep yourself from getting infected with STIs?
- Do you use condoms or other barrier methods consistently? If not, in which situations are you more likely to use a condom or other barrier?
- Have you ever used emergency PEP after a possible exposure to HIV?

Past History of STIs

- Have you ever been diagnosed with an STI, such as herpes, gonorrhea, chlamydia, syphilis, HPV or trichomoniasis? When?
- Have you had any recurring symptoms or STI diagnoses?
- Have you ever been emotionally or physically abused by a partner?

To assess HIV and hepatitis risk, ask:

- When was your last HIV test?
- Have you or any of your partners been diagnosed with HIV or hepatitis C?
- Have you or any of your partners injected drugs?

Pregnancy

- Are you trying to have a child? Do you want to avoid pregnancy?
- Are you using contraception or practicing any form of birth control?
- Do you need any information or a referral for birth control or fertility services?

Best practices for obtaining a sexual history:

Ensure a safe patient environment *Assure confidentiality*

Be nonjudgmental *Be sensitive and matter-of-fact* *Avoid assumptions*

Take a sexual history from all patients.