

#healthyadulthood

A YOUNG INVINCIBLES INITIATIVE

Sexual Health & Preventive Care

Did you know that insurance plans now cover the cost of preventive care, meaning you can access prevention services for free? If you're sexually active or thinking about becoming sexually active, take these steps to keep yourself protected and healthy.

What is Sexual Health?

The term "sexual health" describes a positive physical, emotional, mental, and social relationship to sexuality.^[1] This includes avoiding infections or an unwanted pregnancy, as well as an understanding and respect for others' sexual rights, and an ability to communicate openly with a sexual partner and health care provider.

Your primary care provider can help you be sexually healthy by answering your questions, and by providing health care services that are covered by your insurance plan – and free to you.

Sexually transmitted infections are infections that are spread through interpersonal sexual conduct.^[2] Common STIs include chlamydia, gonorrhea, HIV, herpes, HPV, and syphilis. It is important to remember that while some STIs cause very obvious symptoms, many STIs cause no symptoms or only mild symptoms. In fact, most people who have an STI have no symptoms. **A test from your health care provider may be the only sure way to tell if you are infected.**

What are STIs (Sexually Transmitted Infections)?

Sexual and reproductive health issues affect both men and women, and it's important for everyone to be aware of safe practices. Rates of unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) remain higher for young adults compared to older adults. For example, a 2014 survey found:

Why is Sexual Health Important for Young Adults?

- 15-24 year olds represented **66%** of all reported chlamydia cases^[3]
- Women 20-24 had the **highest rate of chlamydia** compared to any other age and sex group^[4]
- Males 20-24 have the **highest rates of gonorrhea** compared to other males^[5]
- Rates of gonorrhea among black men 20-24 was **10.7 times** higher than among white men the same age^[6]

Young adults are more vulnerable to STIs because of for a number of reasons – including biology. For example, women 20-24 may be more likely to catch chlamydia because of something called "cervical ectopy" or how cells develop on the outer surface of the cervix. Although this is normal in young women, these cells cause young women to be more vulnerable to infection.^[7]

STIs may seem scary and embarrassing, but they don't have to be - and your primary care provider is here to help. Talk to your provider about when and how often to get tested, and how to talk to your partner about safe sex. Here are some guiding questions that might help you start the conversation with your provider:



Talk to Your Provider

I'm sexually active, but not sure what all I need to do to be safe. Can you help with the first steps?

I want to talk to my partner about getting tested. What's your advice for starting this conversation?

I'm thinking about becoming sexually active, how can I get birth control?

Sexual Health-Related Preventive Services

Insurance plans now must cover preventive care at no cost to you; **that means you pay \$0**. Testing and counseling is provided for:

Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) prevention counseling

HIV screening test

Syphilis screening test

Gonorrhea screening test

Chlamydia Infection screening test

Immunizations:

- Hepatitis A
- Hepatitis B
- HPV (Human Papillomavirus)



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Birth Control

Birth control allows us to prevent pregnancy and plan the timing of pregnancy. Today there are many safe and effective birth control methods available. FDA-approved contraceptive methods prescribed by a woman's doctor, including the contraceptive pill, IUDs, the ring, and the patch, are covered under the ACA at no cost. *Male or female condoms are not covered by insurance plans, and therefore are not free with insurance.*

Still have questions about preventive care?

Check out younginvincibles.org and the Center for Disease Control's resources at www.cdc.gov/sexualhealth/

[Click here for a full glossary of health insurance terms.](#)

[1] "Sexual Health," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), <http://www.cdc.gov/sexualhealth/>

[2] "Sexually transmitted infections," World Health Organization, http://www.who.int/topics/sexually_transmitted_infections/en/

[3] "STDs in Adolescents and Young Adults," CDC, <http://www.cdc.gov/std/stats14/adol.htm>

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] "STDs in Racial and Ethnic Minorities," CDC, <http://www.cdc.gov/std/stats14/minorities.htm>

[7] "STDs in Adolescents and Young Adults," CDC, <http://www.cdc.gov/std/stats14/adol.htm>