Sexual Transmitted Infections
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Awareness
According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), nearly half of the 20 million new sexual transmitted infections (STIs) diagnosed each year are among young people aged 15-24 years. STIs can be passed during vaginal, anal and oral sex. Common STIs seen in college students include human papillomavirus (HPV), chlamydia and genital herpes.

You can’t tell if someone has an STI by just looking at them. Many STIs don’t have symptoms (often go undiagnosed and untreated) but can still be passed to someone else. All STIs, even human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), are treatable, and most are curable. Untreated STIs can lead to serious health problems, especially for women, and increase your risk of getting HIV.

Everyone who is sexually active is at risk for acquiring or transmitting an STI. The only sure way to avoid STIs is not have vaginal, anal or oral sex. Others ways to reduce your risks include:

- Using latex condoms correctly and consistently.
- Getting vaccinated against viral diseases that are sexually transmitted (e.g., HPV, Hepatitis B).
- Maintaining a mutual monogamous relationship-agree to be sexually active with only one person, who has agreed to be sexually active with only you.
- Reducing your number of sex partners.
- Avoiding alcohol abuse or using recreational drugs—judgment may be inhibited making you more willing to participate in risky behavior.

You should also think STI prevention even if you are using birth control methods like the pill, patch, ring and IUD. These methods are effective at preventing pregnancy but they do not protect against STIs and HIV.

Get Tested
The sooner you know your status, the better you can protect your health and the health of your partner. STI screening recommendations are found on the CDC website (www.cdc.gov). Talk with your partner about when you were last tested and suggest getting tested together. It is important to have an open and honest conversation with your health care provider about your sexual history and testing. STI testing can be simple and usually painless. If you have a STI, tell your partner. Both you and your partner may need to be treated at the same time to avoid getting re-infected.

Now is the time to take control of your life. STI testing and treatment can help reduce the spread of STIs and keep you and your partner healthy.