

A TEEN GUIDE TO SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CARE

# YOU Taking Care Of

How Much Do You Know About  
**Your Sexual Health?**  
Take Our Quiz And Find Out.

**Where To Go!**  
Finding The  
Reproductive  
Health Center That's  
Right For You!

What You Can Do  
If You're **NOT**  
Treated Right.

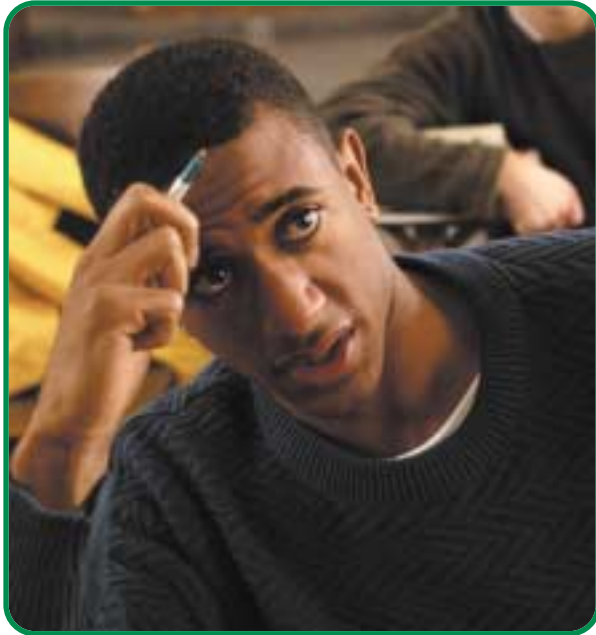
**Plus**

The 411: Where To Look For Services.  
Special Report Card: Rating Your Clinic Experience.



Planned Parenthood  
of New York City, Inc.

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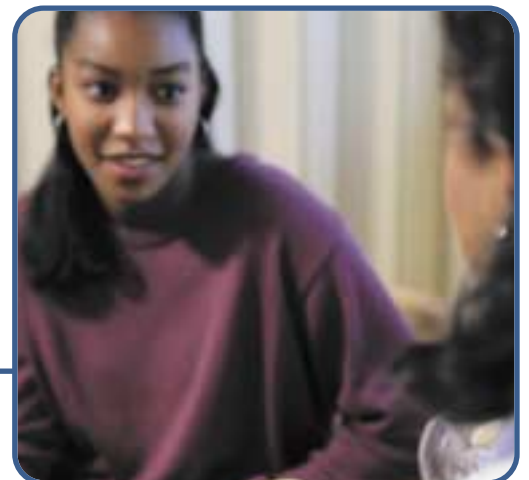
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**Taking Care Of  
YOU**

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**Planned Parenthood**  
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# A Teen to Teen Message

*“Where can I go if I have a problem or if I need birth control?”*

*“Will I be treated well?”*

*“Will my privacy be respected?”*

*“How will I pay for it?”*

**M**any of us have these questions and concerns when it comes to getting the help that we need. Some of us may even be nervous about getting help because of stories we’ve heard from our friends. Not knowing what to expect or where to go can be a scary experience, but it doesn’t have to be that way. Reproductive health centers, sometimes called “family planning centers” or “clinics,” can

give you the information and services that you need to take care of your body and prevent unwanted pregnancies. Reproductive health centers are confidential (the center won’t tell anyone that you were there), and most are affordable for teens.

Did you know that there are reproductive health centers that have special services for teens? A lot of us don’t know about these ser-

VICES or how to pick a center that is **teen-friendly** (a good place for teens to go). That’s why we wrote *Taking Care of You*—to inform teens about how to take care of their bodies, about their reproductive rights, and about what to look for when choosing a reproductive health center. We even included a section on what to do if you are treated badly at a reproductive health center.

*Taking Care of You* is for both girls and guys because we all need the facts on how to stay healthy and where to go for help. A lot of teens get caught out there with a sexually transmitted infection or become parents before they’re ready. No one wants to be in that situation and no one should have to. Besides, taking control of your health is about respecting yourself and looking out for your future whether you are sexually active or not. This guide is full of information that we hope will help you to stay healthy and get the services that you need!



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# Test Your Knowledge:

True or False?



How much do you know about sexual health and reproductive rights for teens? Take this True or False quiz and test your knowledge! Check out the rest of this guide for more information.

## QUESTIONS

- 1 You can tell if someone has a sexually transmitted infection by the way she/he looks.

True  False
- 2 Teens need their parents' permission to get reproductive health and family planning services.

True  False
- 3 Teens have the right to confidential reproductive health and family planning services.

True  False
- 4 Most sexually transmitted infections will eventually go away without medication.

True  False
- 5 Girls who have had sexual intercourse or are over 18 years old should have yearly gynecological\* examinations.

True  False
- 6 Pregnancy tests can give accurate results as early as two weeks after unprotected sex.

True  False
- 7 People who only have unprotected oral or anal sex are at less risk of getting a sexually transmitted infection.

True  False
- 8 Emergency contraceptive pills can be taken to avoid pregnancy up to 3 days after unprotected sex.

True  False
- 9 Teens who have never had sex don't need to know about reproductive health services.

True  False
- 10 The only thing a person can do if she or he did not like the care at a reproductive health center is to go to another center the next time.

True  False

**\*Gynecological (GUY-neh-koh-LODGE-eh-cal)**—  
Describes medicine that focuses on women's health and disease.



# ANSWERS:

1 FALSE

You can't tell if someone has a sexually transmitted infection (STI) by the way he or she looks. Many people infected with STIs don't have any symptoms. So, most people infected with an STI don't even know it. Yet, untreated STIs can still be transmitted (spread) and can still harm the body. Each year, more than 3 million teens in the United States are infected with an STI. Abstaining from sex (not having vaginal, oral, or anal sex) is the best way to prevent the transmission of STIs. If you are having sex, the most effective way to prevent the transmission of STIs is to use a latex condom each and every time you have sex (including vaginal, anal, and oral sex).

2 FALSE

Teens don't need their parents' consent to get reproductive health care services. Federal and New York State laws protect teens' rights to get reproductive health and family planning services without their parents' consent, including birth control, STI testing and treatment, and abortion. If you live in another state, you can get birth control and STI testing and treatment without your parents' consent. However, you may need parental consent to get an abortion, depending on your state's laws.

3 TRUE

Reproductive health services are confidential. That means that a reproductive health center cannot share information about your visit without your permission. Federal and New York State laws protect teens' rights to confidential services.

4 FALSE

STIs do not go away on their own without medication. Untreated STIs will continue to have harmful effects on the body, even if it seems that the symptoms have gone away. If you have never had symptoms, which is very common, the STI can still harm your body. Some STIs can cause sterility (inability to get pregnant or make someone pregnant) or even lead to death if not treated. If you think that you may have been infected with an STI, see a medical provider\* right away. In addition, all medication prescribed to treat an STI must be taken or the infection will still remain in the body, causing serious health problems.

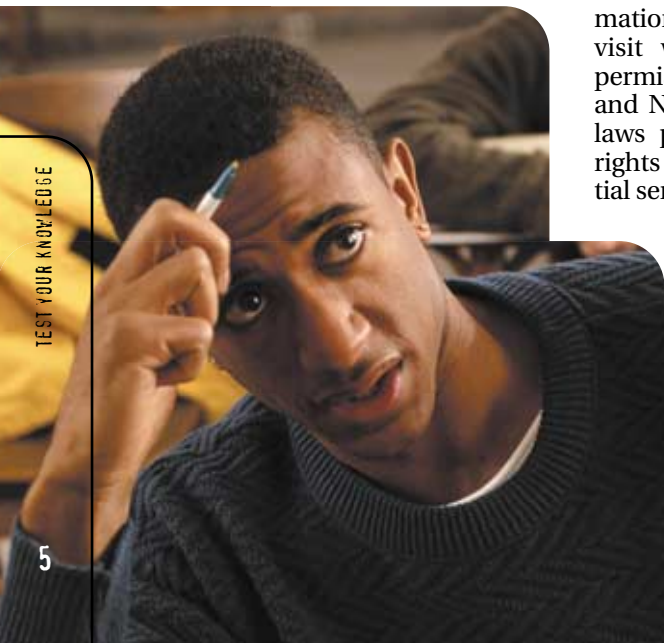
5 TRUE

Girls should have yearly gynecological (GYN) exams when they start having sex or after they turn 18 years old, whichever comes first. The GYN exam can help to ensure that a girl's reproductive organs are healthy and also spot problems like sexually transmitted infections early. Read *Taking Care of You* (p. 9) for more information.

6 TRUE

Most pregnancy tests can give accurate results as early as two weeks after unprotected sex. Even home pregnancy tests, which can be bought in pharmacies and supermarkets, can give accurate results in two weeks. If a girl finds out that she is pregnant, she should go to a reproductive health center or see a medical provider right away. Whether a girl decides to continue or end her pregnancy, early medical care can help to reduce possible complications. It can be scary for a girl to find out that she's pregnant. Most reproductive health centers provide counseling, where a girl can talk to a caring person about her feelings and learn about her choices.

**\*Medical provider**—A health care professional trained to give medical treatment, such as a doctor, physician assistant, or nurse practitioner.



**SOMETHING ELSE TO KNOW ABOUT PREGNANCY:** Although it doesn't happen often, sometimes a girl can have what is called an "ectopic (ek-TOP-ic) pregnancy." In an ectopic pregnancy, the fertilized egg begins to grow inside of a fallopian tube\* instead of the uterus,\* which can cause the tube to burst. Ectopic pregnancies are very dangerous and can lead to death if not caught and treated early. Ectopic pregnancies cause sharp pains in the lower abdomen (lower belly). If you suspect that you have an ectopic pregnancy, see a medical provider right away!



# Your Rights

Do you know your rights when it comes to your sexual and reproductive health? Unfortunately, so many of us don't know our rights and don't get the care or services we need because of fear and misinformation. Here are some important rights that you should know:

According to federal and New York State laws, you have the right to:

## Reproductive health care without permission from your parents or guardians.

This includes GYN exams and care, pregnancy testing, birth control, prenatal care, testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections, HIV counseling and testing, and abortion.

## Confidentiality.

This means that information about your visit to a reproductive health center and the medical treatment you receive cannot be given to anyone without your permission.

## That's the law. But your rights don't stop there. You also have the right to:

- \* Have information about how to take care of your sexual health. Read *Taking Care of You* (pp. 8-10).
- \* Choose a center that will meet your needs. Read *Looking for a Place to Go* (pp. 12-14).
- \* Get high-quality care. Read *Is This the Place for You?* (p. 20).

## 7 FALSE

Unprotected oral sex, anal sex, and vaginal sex can **all** place a person at risk of getting an STI. Although most STIs are transmitted more easily through anal or vaginal sex, some STIs can also be transmitted through oral sex. So, to protect yourself against STIs, use condoms for oral, anal, and vaginal sex, every time.

## 8 TRUE

The emergency contraceptive pill, sometimes called the "morning-after pill," must be taken within 72 hours (3 days) after sexual intercourse to prevent pregnancy. Emergency contraceptive pills are about 75-86% effective in preventing pregnancy. They are most effective when taken as soon as possible after unprotected sex. For more information on emergency contraception, call the National Emergency Contraception Hotline (1-888-668-2528).

## 9 FALSE

Teens who are not having sex still need to know about reproductive health services. It is always good to have information before you need it. Knowledge about reproductive health services can help you to be prepared when you decide to start having sex. You also need to know where to go for help in case you have a reproductive health problem. In addition, you could be helpful to your friends who may be having sex and need to know where to go for birth control and reproductive health care.

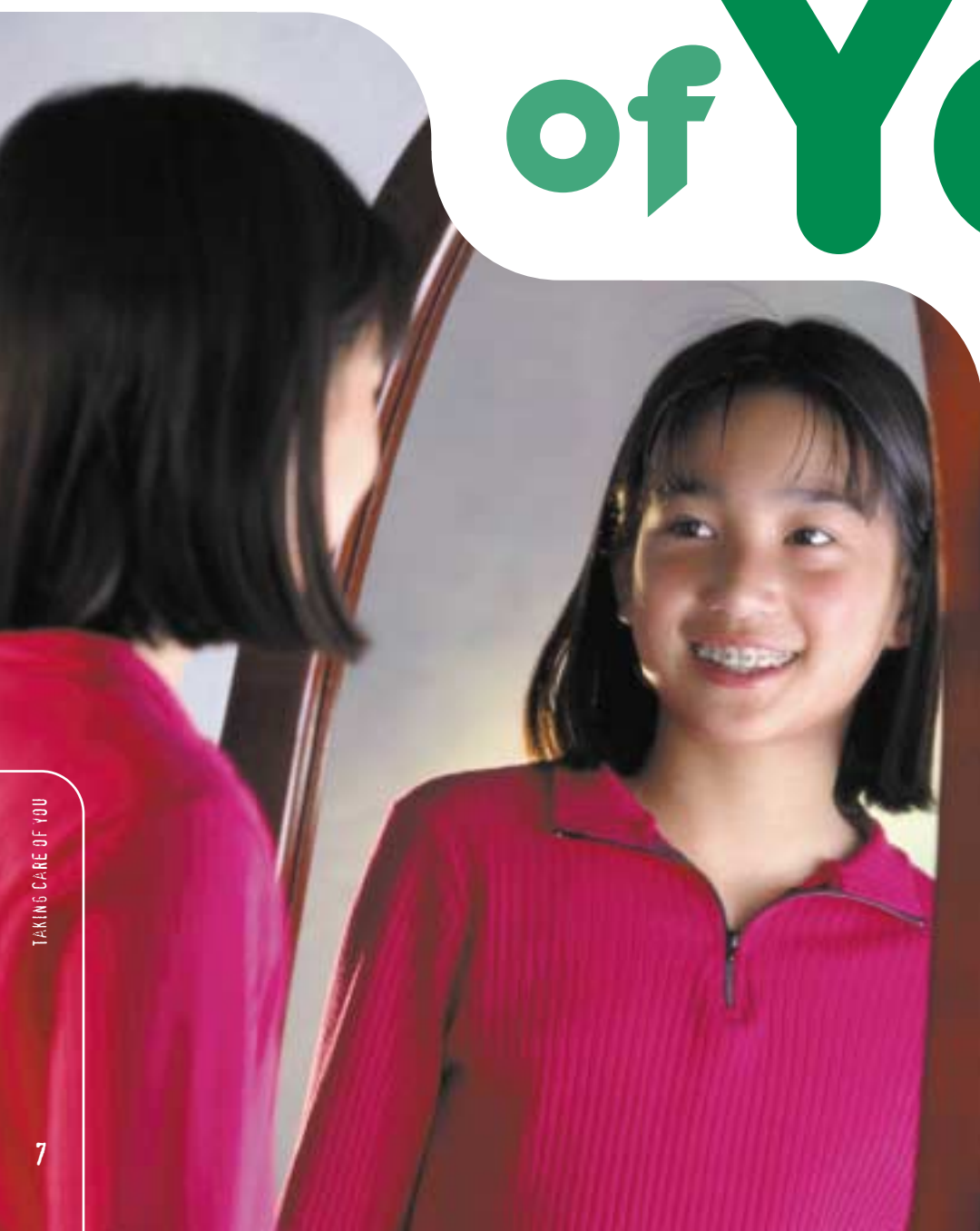
## 10 FALSE

Although you are always free to go to another center, there are things that you can do to voice your concerns if you don't like the services that you received at a reproductive health center. To learn about how to voice your concerns, read *Treated Foul? Here's What You Can Do* (p. 19).

\***Fallopian (Fuh-LOPE-e-an) tubes**—Two thin tubes that provide a passage for eggs traveling from the ovaries to the uterus.

\***Uterus (YOU-ter-us)**—An organ that looks like an upside-down pear, which sheds a lining of blood when a woman is menstruating. The uterus is also where normal pregnancy develops.

# Taking Care of You





As teens, there are times when we might not pay attention to what’s happening inside of our bodies, particularly when it comes to our reproductive health. Ignorance, embarrassment, and misinformation often prevent us from taking control of our reproductive health. Well, it doesn’t have to be that way. We can take control, starting with learning how to care for our bodies.

The first step to taking care of your body is to become familiar with what is normal for you. Be aware of changes in the way you look or feel. If you notice anything unusual such as an abnormal discharge,\* or if you have any pain, swelling, bumps, sores, or itching, see a medical provider right away. You should see a medical provider as soon as possible because these problems can become worse and more serious over time. Here are some tips on how to take care of your sexual health.

**\*Discharge**—A liquid slippery substance that comes out of the vagina. If the discharge is a different color than usual or foul-smelling, it can be a sign of infection. Discharge from the penis—a “drip” of a liquid substance other than semen or pre-ejaculatory fluid (the clear liquid that comes out of the penis before semen)—can be a sign of infection for a guy.

## Breast Self-Exam


Women are strongly encouraged to do a breast self-exam every month. The breast self-exam is helpful for spotting lumps or abnormal changes in the breasts that might be a sign of breast cancer. Although all breast lumps are not signs of breast cancer, it is best to see a medical provider as soon as

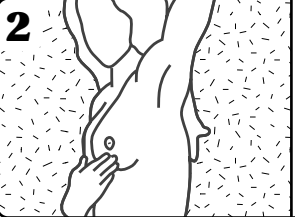
you notice a lump or abnormal change in your breasts.

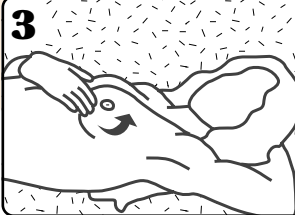
Breast cancer is very rare among teen girls. However, it is good to start doing monthly breast exams now so that you will be in the habit of doing the exam when you're older. The breast exam can also help you spot problems other than

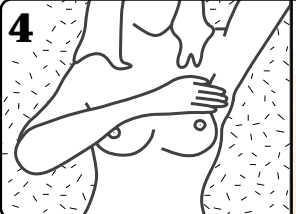
cancer that may need to be checked out by a medical provider. The breast self-exam should be done once a month about a week after your period ends when your breasts aren't swollen or tender. If you don't have regular periods, do your exam around the same time every month.

Here are 4 simple steps you can take to do a breast self-exam:

**1**  Stand in front of a mirror. Look at each breast to see if there is anything unusual such as puckering or dimpling. Put your hands on your waist and tighten your chest muscles; then check again for any puckering or dimpling. Now put your hands above your head and see if you notice any puckering or dimpling. (Dimpling or puckering of the breasts can be a sign of a problem.) Bring your hands down and gently squeeze each nipple to see if fluid comes out. A lot of fluid, dark fluid, or fluid full of pus are signs of a possible problem and should be checked out by a medical provider.

**2**  While you are still in front of the mirror, place your right hand behind your head. Hold the fingers of your left hand flat. Gently feel the right breast for lumps, bumps, or thickening. Now raise your left arm and check the left breast.

**3**  Lie back with a pillow or folded towel under your right shoulder. Place your right hand behind your head. Hold your left hand flat and feel every part of your right breast with your fingertips. Gently press in small circles. Next, start at the top of the outermost edge of your breast and move your hand in a circular motion to your nipple. Feel for lumps, bumps, or thickening. Now do the left breast.

**4**  Rest your right arm on a flat, hard surface like the top of a bookshelf. Feel your underarm for lumps, bumps, or anything abnormal. Now do the same to your left underarm.

## Gynecological Exam

Once a girl starts having sex or after she turns 18 years old, she should have a gynecological exam (GYN exam) every year. A GYN exam can help to ensure that you are healthy and also spot problems—like sexually transmitted infections—early. The GYN exam is par-

ticularly important because many girls either do not have or notice any signs or symptoms of a problem, which can put them at risk for serious damage to their bodies.

During a GYN exam, the medical provider will do a breast exam to see if there are any lumps or abnormal

changes in your breasts, and a pelvic exam to make sure that your vulva (the outer part of the vagina), vagina, uterus, and ovaries\* are all normal and healthy. Also, the GYN exam gives you an opportunity to ask questions about your body, birth control, safer sex, and how to stay healthy.

\***Ovaries (OH-vah-reez)**—Two round glands that store eggs in a woman's body.

## Testicular Self-Exam

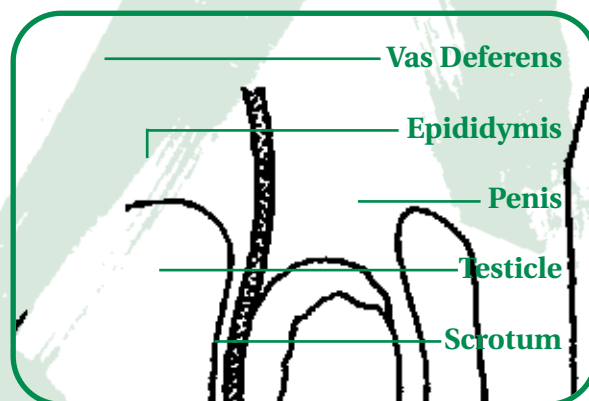
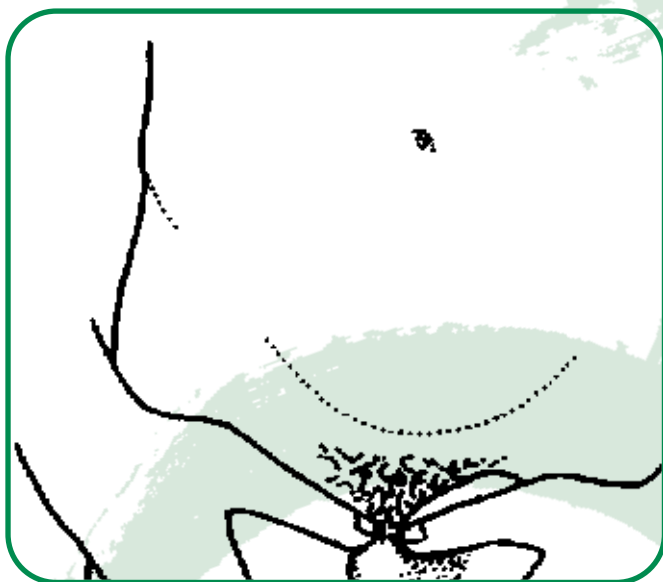
The testicular self-exam is very important because it can help to spot problems in the testicles\*—like testicular cancer—early. Testicular cancer is one of the most common cancers found in young

men. The good news is that testicular cancer is curable!

In order to spot possible signs of testicular cancer, it is recommended that guys examine their testicles once a month, starting at 15 years

old. Pick a time once a month that you can do your exam. A good time to exam your testicles is while in the shower or after a shower because the scrotum\* will be more relaxed, making it easier to feel the testicles.

Here are 3 simple steps you can take to do a testicular self-exam:



**1** Hold one of your testicles with your thumb on top and your index and middle fingers on the bottom.

**2** Feel for hard lumps or bumps about the size of a pea. Most guys will feel a ridge at the back of their testicles, which is totally normal. That ridge is the epididymis (eh-pih-DIH-dih-miss), where sperm are kept until they become mature (fully developed).

**3** Now do the other testicle.

**\*** If you notice any lumps, bumps, abnormal changes, aches, or pain, go see a medical provider right away.

## Physical Exam

Guys should have a physical exam every year, particularly guys who play sports. As a part of your physical exam, the medical provider will examine your testicles

and penis to check for lumps, bumps, or anything abnormal. If you think that you may have been infected with an STI, tell the provider so that he or she can test

you for STIs. The yearly physical exam also gives you an opportunity to ask questions about your body, birth control, safer sex, and how to stay healthy.

**\*Testicles (TES-ti-kulls)**—Two egg-shaped glands at the bottom of a man's penis that produce sperm. Sometimes called "balls" or "nuts."

**\*Scrotum (SKRO-tum)**—The thin skin that covers the testicles.

# Looking for a Place to Go



Looking for a reproductive health center is like looking for any other service that is important to you—you want to increase your chances of finding a place that you will like. One way is to get a referral. Ask a close friend if

he or she has been to a center or knows of a place that provides the services you need. If you have a friend who has been to a center, ask these questions to find out more about the quality of services there:

*“What did you think of the services?”*

*“How did you feel about the way that you were treated?”*

*“Was it clean?”*

*“How much did it cost?”*

*“How long did you wait to be seen?”*

Often, school counselors and nurses have information about centers that are **teen-friendly**. But, if you don't feel comfortable asking a school counselor, friend, or anyone else, there are other sources of information. Try a youth newspaper, youth hotline, or sexual health website. For a list of places you can contact to find out about services, check out *The 411: Where To Look For Services* (p. 22). Finally, you could look in a telephone directory's yellow pages under “Birth Control” or “Clinics.” Try to find at least two centers, so that you will have a choice.

Sometimes language used to advertise services can be confusing. For example: centers that provide “abortion alternatives” do not offer any type of abortion. In fact, these services encourage patients to continue their pregnancies and consider options such as adoption. If you are confused by the language used to advertise a service, or if you are unsure about the services offered at a center, be sure to call the center and find out whether they offer the services that you want.

## CHECKLIST

Once you know of some centers that you can choose from, there are many things to think about when making your choice. Usually, it is best to choose a center that has teen services or a lot of experience working

with teens. These centers tend to be more **teen-friendly**. You should also think about your needs and preferences. Here is a checklist of things that you can consider when making your choice:

1. Would you like to go to a center that is close to home or outside of the neighborhood?  
 Close to home       Outside of the neighborhood
2. What services do you need?  
 GYN exam and care  
 Birth control  
 Pregnancy testing and options counseling  
 Prenatal care  
 Abortion  
 Sexually transmitted infection testing and treatment  
 HIV counseling and testing
3. Do you need free or reduced-fee services? (Many centers have free services for teens.)  
 Yes       No
4. Would you like the choice of a female or male medical provider?  
 Yes       No  
 Male       Female
5. Would you prefer a center that is specifically for teens, or one that serves all ages?  
 Teens       All ages
6. Would you like a center that is female- or male-only, or one that serves both?  
 Female-only       Male-only       Both
7. Do you need a center that has multilingual staff?  
 Yes       No  
Which languages \_\_\_\_\_
8. Would you like to involve your partner or bring a friend or family member with you for support?  
 Yes       No
9. Do you need a place that is wheelchair-accessible?  
 Yes       No
10. How soon do you need an appointment? \_\_\_\_\_

If you think you may be pregnant or have a sexually transmitted infection, you should see a medical provider as soon as possible—within the week. If you have had unprotected sex, or your birth control method has failed, you can get emergency contraceptive pills to prevent pregnancy (about 75-86% effective). In order for the pills to be effective, you must take them as soon as possible, no later than 3 days after unprotected sex.

Once you have a list of things that you are looking for in a center, you are ready to start! Call each center to find out which ones meet your needs. For example, let's say that you think you may have been infected with a sexually transmitted infection and you want to be tested right away, you don't have much money, and

you really want to see a female provider. You can call a center and say: "I am calling to find out about your services. I think I may have an infection and I want to be examined. Do you have appointments available this week? I'm a teenager and I don't have much money. Do you have free or low-cost services for teens? (If you are told that low-cost services or sliding-scale fees\* are available, ask how much you will be charged.) I prefer to be examined by a female. Can I make an appointment to be seen by a female provider?"

Don't hesitate to call around until you find the center that is best for you. You may not be able to find a center that has everything on your list, but you can choose a center that provides the things that are most important to you.

## MAKING AN APPOINTMENT

Now that you have done your research, you are ready to pick up the phone and make an appointment!

**Here are 4 helpful hints for making an appointment:**

1. Have a pen and paper available so that you can write down any instructions, requirements, or notes you may want to make.
2. Have a calendar in front of you, or if that is not possible, think before you place the call about **when** you would like an appointment.
3. Find out what type of identification or papers you need to bring to your appointment. Sometimes, you may be asked for information over the phone. This is usually done to reduce the number of forms that you will have to complete when you get to the center.
4. Be sure to ask any questions that you have about the center, services, costs, and medical providers.



**For Girls:** If you are making an appointment for a GYN exam, try to schedule a time when you don't expect to have your period, unless you are having problems with bleeding that you need checked out. Some lab tests should not be performed while you are having your period because the results can be affected. If you unexpectedly get your period the day of your appointment, call the center to find out if you should reschedule.



**You should be treated with respect and courtesy when you call to make an appointment. If you don't like the way that you are treated, there are things that you can do. For more information, check out *Treated Foul? Here's What You Can Do* (p. 19).**

**\*Sliding-scale fees**—Discounted fees usually based on a patient's income.

# A Special Note

## about Medical Insurance

Teens often ask whether information about their visit to a reproductive health center will be sent to their home if they use their parents' health insurance. Because there are many different types of health insurance, each with its

own policies, it is hard to give a general answer. Since many teens are covered by their parents through one of three types of health insurance, here is what we know about these forms of coverage.

### PRIVATE INSURANCE

*Private health insurance is insurance that people buy directly or receive through their jobs to pay for their medical expenses.*

Most private insurance companies send benefit statements (sometimes called "Explanation of Benefits" or "EOB") or co-payment statements to the insurance holder (owner of the insurance policy). These state-

ments may reveal confidential information about the visit or lab tests performed. To find out whether confidential information will be sent to the insurance holder, a teen who is considering using his or her parents' insurance to pay for services should ask the health center or contact the insurance company directly to ask about the company's policies.

### MEDICAID

*Medicaid is health insurance provided by the government for low-income people and families who qualify.*

Medicaid generally does not send information about the visit to the insurance holder (usually the head of the household or whoever applied for Medicaid for the family). However, almost all reproductive health centers use outside labs, and these labs may send statements to the insurance holder. Ask the center you intend to visit whether the labs will send statements.

*A pregnant teen can get her own Medicaid insurance.* Most reproductive health centers have staff who can help a pregnant teen apply for Medicaid. If she does not want her Medicaid information to go to her home, she

can inform the person who is assisting her that she would like to use another address as her "mailing address." In New York State, as soon as a pregnant teen applies for Medicaid, even before approval is final, she can immediately use Medicaid to cover her prenatal care, abortion, or other pregnancy-related medical expenses. If her application is approved, she can continue to use her Medicaid. If her application is not approved, she should ask the center how to apply for Child Health Plus or how to obtain services at a reduced fee. (Pregnant teens who live in states other than New York should check with a reproductive health center in their area about how they can apply for Medicaid and what services Medicaid covers.)

### CHILD HEALTH PLUS

*Child Health Plus is a health insurance plan sponsored by New York State for all young people up to 19 years old who do not qualify for Medicaid and do not have other insurance.*

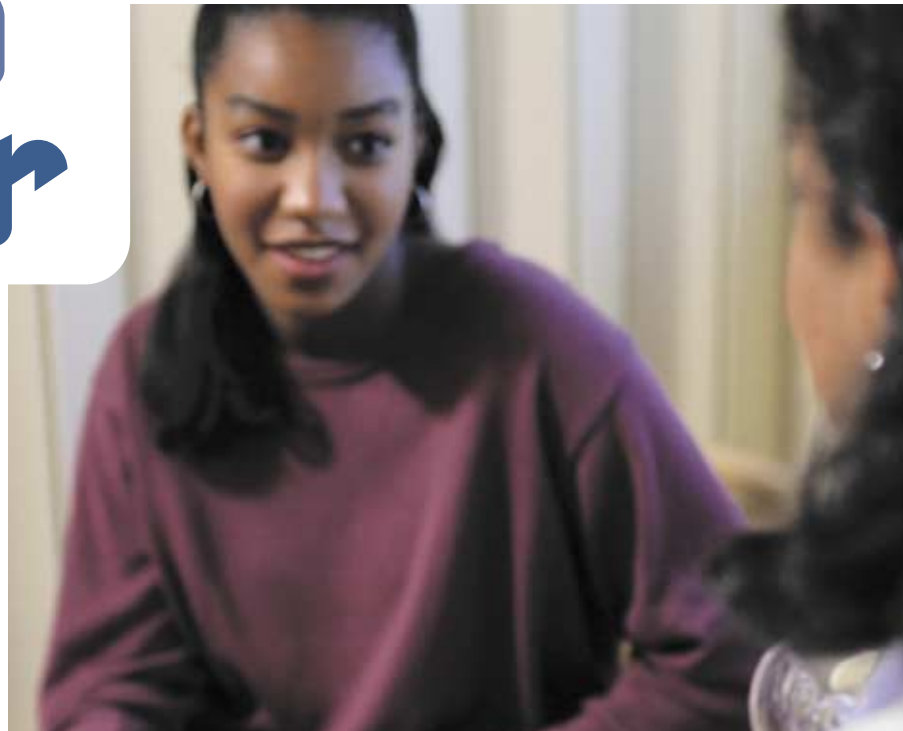
Child Health Plus is available through many different health insurance plans throughout

the state. Because each health plan has its own policy, there is a chance that benefit statements including information about your visit could be sent to your home. Ask your health center or contact the insurance company directly to ask about the company's policies.

If you are concerned about protecting your confidentiality, you can always pay for services directly. Many reproductive health centers offer free or low-cost services and sliding-scale

fees for teens. When you call the center of your choice, ask whether they offer free services or reduced fees for teens who are paying "out-of-pocket."

# Going >>> to a Reproductive Health Center



It's not unusual to feel nervous about going to a reproductive health center, especially if it's your first time. Knowing how to prepare for a visit and what to expect can help you to feel more comfortable.



## Here's How You Can Prepare for a Visit



### Information

Make sure that you have an identification card, medical insurance card (if you are using medical insurance, including Medicaid), and any other information that was requested when you made your appointment.



### Description

If you are going to a center because of a problem or possible infection, be prepared to describe the symptoms that you are having and when they began. Girls should also be prepared to give the date of the first day of their last menstrual period.



### Questions

Make a list of questions or problems that you want to discuss.



### Security

Some centers have metal detectors as a part of their security systems to ensure the safety of staff and patients such as yourself. Avoid bringing metal objects or anything that may have to be taken from you before you can enter the center.

## What to Expect during Your Visit

- You may be asked to show some identification and to go through a security system such as a metal detector.
- You will see a front desk or a place where you can check in. Be sure to tell the staff member at the front desk your name and the time of your appointment. The staff member will ask you to sit in the waiting area and fill out some forms. If you have any questions, ask the staff member. Usually, you will be asked for the following information:
  - ▢ Reason for the visit
  - ▢ Whether you have ever had sex
  - ▢ Symptoms that you are having (if you came to check out a problem)
  - ▢ Any other medical problems that you have or have had
  - ▢ Medical problems that other members of your family have
  - ▢ Any medication that you take regularly
  - ▢ Allergies
  - ▢ Previous surgeries
  - ▢ Whether you smoke, drink, or use drugs; if so, how much
  - ▢ Girls will be asked about their period and whether they've ever been pregnant

- It is important that you be honest in your answers. Many times teens feel embarrassed or have concerns about confidentiality. Remember, there are laws to protect your confidentiality. The information that you provide will help the staff know which tests you should have, what information you need to stay healthy, and how best to meet your needs. Any information about your visit, including the forms you fill out, will be kept confidential in a folder called your "patient chart." The patient chart helps to keep important information about your visit and your test results in one place.
- Someone will take your weight, height, blood pressure, and blood and urine samples. These tests are done to make sure that you are in good health.
- You will meet with a counselor, health educator, or medical provider to talk about the reason why you came to the center, birth control methods (if you are having sex or plan to have sex), and other health services that you may need. This is an important chance to ask questions and get all the facts, even if you already know some things.

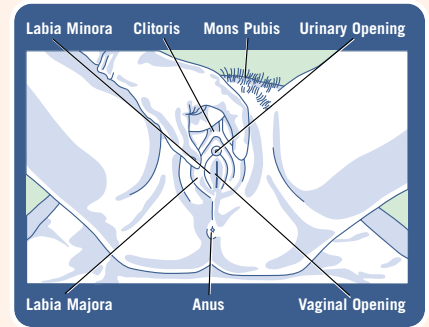
# For Girls

## The Gynecological (GYN) Exam.

**First**, you will go into an examination room and be asked to take off all of your clothes. You will be given an examination gown or sheet to cover your body. If the medical provider is a male, there should also be a female staff member in the room with you during your exam. Also, most centers will allow you to have a partner, friend, or family

member with you during the exam if you need support. Ask in advance, if you would like to have someone you know in the room with you.

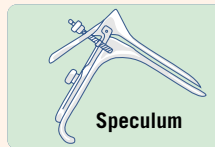
The GYN exam will begin with a breast exam. You will be asked to lie back on the examination table as the medical provider exams your breasts for lumps, thickening, and any other signs of a possible problem.



**After** your breast exam, you will be asked to slide your hips down to the end of the table, put your feet into foot rests called stirrups, and spread your knees apart. For many girls this can feel embarrassing and awkward. Try to relax and take deep breaths. Your medical provider should also help you relax by being gentle and patient and explaining what he or she will be doing.

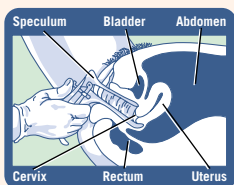
If you would like to watch the exam and see your cervix\* and vagina, you can request that a mirror be placed where you can see. The medical provider will put on examination gloves and begin by looking at your vulva (outside of the vagina) for signs of infection or irri-

tation. Next, he or she will examine the inside of your vagina. The medical provider will use an instrument called the “speculum” to separate the walls of the vagina. The speculum looks like a duckbill. It comes in different sizes and can be made of metal or plastic. Metal speculums are sterilized before each use, and plastic speculums are disposable (a new one is used for each patient). The medical provider should put lubrication on the speculum and warm it (if it is metal) before placing it inside your vagina. Although you can feel some discomfort when the



speculum is placed inside your vagina, you should not feel pain. In order to reduce the amount of discomfort, try to relax the muscles around your stomach and vagina and let the medical provider know that you are feeling discomfort. He or she can readjust the speculum or use a different size. The medical provider will look at your cervix to see if there are any signs of infection or abnormal growth. He or she may take a sample of the mucus around your cervix to be tested for gonorrhea, chlamydia, or other sexually transmitted infections. If you think you or your partner may have an infection, be sure to let the medical provider know so that you can be tested.

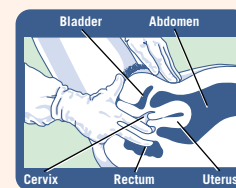
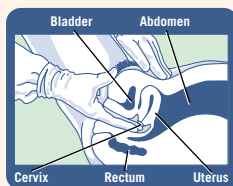
**Next**, with the speculum still inside your vagina, the medical provider will do a Pap smear to test



for a sexually transmitted infection called “Human Papilloma Virus” (HPV) and any abnormal, pre-cancerous, or cancerous cells on the cervix. The Pap smear consists of gently rubbing the cervix with a small spatula or tiny brush to collect cells. The cells are then put on a slide and sent to a lab for testing. If your cells are

abnormal, the center will contact you for a follow-up visit.

The medical provider will then remove the speculum and place one or two lubricated fingers inside your vagina while pressing on your abdomen (lower belly) with the other hand. This part of the exam, called the “bimanual exam,” allows the medical provider to check your ovaries, fallopian tubes, and uterus to make sure that they are healthy. You may feel some discomfort. Relaxing



your muscles and breathing deeply will help you feel better. Also, let the medical provider know if you are feeling uncomfortable. Finally, the medical provider may put lubricated fingers inside of your vagina and anus\* to check your rectum,\* behind your uterus, and the lower walls of your vagina. You may feel as though you need to go to the bathroom. Don't worry; this is normal. The feeling should pass when the fingers are removed.

\***Cervix (SIR-vicks)**—The lower part of the uterus that extends into the vagina. The cervix is shaped like a donut and provides a passage from the vagina to the uterus.

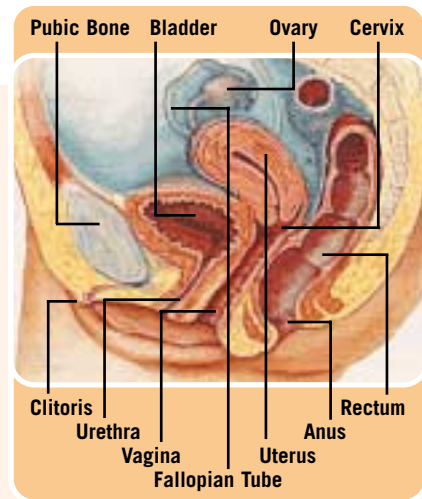
\***Anus (AY-nus)**—The area of the behind where solid waste leaves the body.

\***Rectum (WRECK-tum)**—The end of the large intestine.

**Some** girls spot a little bit of blood at the end of the exam, which is normal. After your exam is over, the medical provider will talk to you about any problems that were revealed by the exam and answer your questions. This is your time. So, make sure you ask all the questions that you have.

If the results of your lab tests show any abnormalities or infections, the center will contact you confidentially (it can take a few weeks for the center

to get your lab test results). Each center has its own way of contacting patients confidentially. You should be informed about how you will be contacted, if necessary, by the end of your visit. It is important that the center be able to reach you. If you are asked to leave your home phone number and you don't feel comfortable doing that, try to leave another number where you can be reached, such as a beeper number or the number of a friend who can contact you.

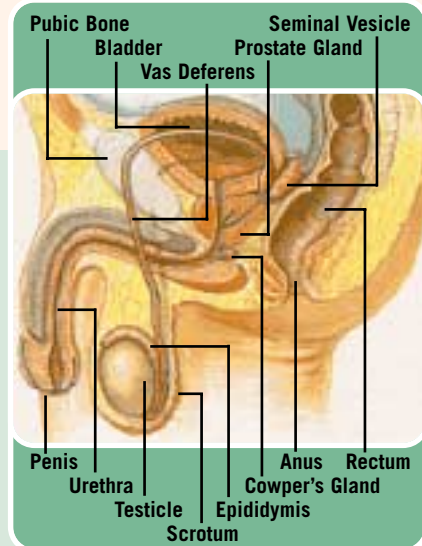


## For Guys

### The Male Genital Exam

**If** you think you may have an infection or notice something abnormal about your genitals,\* a medical provider will examine you to see if there is a problem. You will be asked to go into an examination room and remove your pants and

underwear. You may be given a gown to wear. Most centers will allow you to have a partner, friend, or family member with you during the exam if you need support. Ask in advance, if you would like to have someone you know in the room with you.



**Next,** the medical provider will put on a pair of examination gloves and look at your penis and testicles to see if there are any sores, bumps, lumps, or anything abnormal. He or she will feel your testicles and press on your lower abdomen to see if there are any lumps or signs of a problem. Some guys find the exam embarrassing

and awkward. Take deep breaths to help you relax. Your medical provider should also help you relax by being gentle and patient and explaining what he or she is doing. If you or your medical provider suspect that you may have a sexually transmitted infection, he or she will take a sample of the mucus inside of your urethra.\*

The sample is taken by inserting the tip of a small cotton swab (thinner than a Q-Tip) into your urethra. The sample will then be sent to a lab for testing. This part of the exam may cause some discomfort. Let the medical provider know if you are feeling a lot of discomfort or pain.

**After** your exam, the medical provider will talk to you about any

problems that were revealed by the exam and answer all the questions you

have. Don't feel embarrassed to ask questions. There are no silly questions.

**Finally,** if the results of your lab tests show any abnormalities or infections, the center will contact you confidentially (it can take a few days for the center to get the results of your lab tests). Each center has its

own way of contacting patients confidentially. You should be informed about how you will be contacted, if necessary, by the end of your visit. It is important that the center be able to reach you. If you are asked to leave

your home phone number and you don't feel comfortable doing that, try to leave another number where you can be reached, such as a beeper number or the number of a friend who can contact you.

**\*Genitals (JEN-a-tulls)**—External sex organs. Male genitals consist of the penis and testicles. Female genitals consist of the vulva (outside of the vagina including the clitoris [a small organ, about the size of a pea, that is very sensitive to touch and is located at the top of the vulva between the vaginal lips]).

**\*Urethra (You-REE-thra)**—A thin tube that leads from the bladder to the outside of the penis or vagina.

# Treated Foul?

## Here's What You Can Do

At any point in your visit, did you feel disrespected or uncomfortable? If you had any problems during your visit or when you made your appointment, there are things that you can do. Here are 3 options that you can use to voice your concerns and get the services that you deserve. If you are making a complaint about a staff member, make sure that you know the person's name. You can get the name from his or her identification card or ask for it directly.

## OPTION 1: TAKE IT TO A HIGHER LEVEL

- Ask to speak to the manager or director.
- State your problem, and be very clear about what happened, how you felt, and how it affected your opinion of the center.

Many times people get upset when they feel mistreated and raise their voice or use language that is offensive. This will not help you. Try to be calm and to-the-point. On the

other hand, some people feel uncomfortable about making a complaint and may become very shy. Informing a manager or director about a problem you experienced is the right thing to do. Center managers/directors are interested in learning how patients view their services. A large part of their job is to ensure that patients are satisfied and will continue to visit their center. Also, you will feel better and will help prevent the same thing from happening to someone else.

## OPTION 2: GET YOUR PEN IN ACTION

- Ask for the name of the director or manager and the address of the center.
- Write a letter clearly stating your complaint. The

letter does not have to be lengthy or fancy. Just explain why you weren't satisfied. If you don't mind getting a response at home, include your home address in the letter.

## OPTION 3: LET THEM KNOW

- Many centers have a suggestion box.
- Ask at the front desk if the center has a suggestion box.

Write out your complaint or suggestion and drop it in the box. This option usually allows you to make an anonymous complaint.

## DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY? HERE ARE A FEW EXAMPLES

Maria went to a center for a gynecological exam and birth control. She was dissatisfied with the gynecological exam. She went to the front desk and asked to see the director. Maria told the director that Dr. John examined her and she was uncomfortable during the exam because

he was rough and rushed through the exam. She also said that she came to the center because a friend recommended it; but after the way she was treated, she does not think she will come back to the center or recommend it to her friends.

.....  
Tony went to a center to be tested for HIV. He felt that the person at the front desk was rude when he asked a question about the form he was given to complete at the beginning of his visit. After finding out the name of the director and the center's address, he wrote this letter

.....  
Maria and Tony used different ways to voice their concerns, but both of them were clear and to-the-point, which is the most important thing. The more teens speak out when they have a problem, the less likely that other teens will experience the same problem. So speak out when you feel like you've been treated foul!

1/15/00

Dear Ms. Lawrence,

I am a teenager who went to your center on 1/15/00 for services. I am writing you to make a complaint about the services that I received.

At the beginning of my visit I was given a form to fill out. I asked Ms. Tully at the front desk a question about the form. First, she ignored me. Then she rudely said "Fill it out the best way you can." She made me feel that my question was unimportant and that I was bothering her. She made me feel like walking out.

Although the other staff members were caring and courteous, I was still bothered by the way Ms. Tully treated me. I think it's important for patients to be treated with respect by everyone, so that they will want to come back again.

Sincerely,

Anthony Johnson

# The 411 For Girls and Guys

● Where  
to Look  
● for Services



## HOTLINES

### Reproductive Health Care and Family Planning Services

Planned Parenthood of New York City's Facts of Life Line 212-965-7015  
Planned Parenthood of New York City's Appointment Line 212-965-7000  
Planned Parenthood National Appointment Hotline 1-800-230-PLAN (1-800-230-7526)  
New York City Youth Line 1-800-246-4646  
Women's Health Line 212-230-1111

### Emergency Contraception

Emergency Contraception 1-888-not.2.late (1-888-668-2-5283)

### Sexually Transmitted Infections Testing and Treatment

New York City Department of Health STD Hotline 212-427-5120  
National STD Hotline 1-800-227-8922

## WEBSITES

[www.ppnyc.org](http://www.ppnyc.org)  
[www.teenwire.com](http://www.teenwire.com)  
[www.teenpregnancy.org/teenresource.htm](http://www.teenpregnancy.org/teenresource.htm)  
[www.teenpregnancy.org/espanol.htm](http://www.teenpregnancy.org/espanol.htm)  
[www.sxetc.org](http://www.sxetc.org)  
[www.zaphealth.com](http://www.zaphealth.com)

## YOUTH NEWSPAPERS

**"New Youth Connections"**  
Available at most New York City schools; for more information, call 212-242-3270

# About Planned Parenthood of New York City

At Planned Parenthood of New York City (PPNYC), we have more than 80 years of experience providing quality reproductive health care in a safe, supportive environment. We offer a wide range of health services to women, including teen girls, and some health services to men, including teen guys. PPNYC offers:

- Birth control—birth control pills; Depo-Provera; Norplant; diaphragm; cervical cap; IUD; male and female condoms; foams, creams, and jellies
- Emergency contraception
- Pregnancy testing and options counseling
- Surgical first- and second-trimester abortion under local, conscious sedation, or general anesthesia
- Early abortion, including non-surgical abortion
- GYN care, including screening for breast and cervical cancer
- Colposcopy, cryotherapy, and loop electro-surgical excision procedures
- STI testing, counseling, and treatment
- HIV testing, counseling, and case management (oral testing available)
- Prenatal care
- Help with Medicaid and Child Health Plus applications

PPNYC has 3 health centers in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and the Bronx. The centers are staffed by highly trained professionals, experts in their fields who know that providing the best possible care means listening to patients' concerns with understanding and respect. When you talk to us, it's always confidential. **To make an appointment at any one of our 3 centers, call 212-965-7000.**

## OTHER PPNYC RESOURCES

\*Visit our website at [www.ppnyc.org](http://www.ppnyc.org).

### Get the Facts!

PPNYC's Facts of Life Line is a 24-hour hotline offering pre-recorded messages in English and Spanish on more than 200 topics related

to sexuality, reproductive health, and general wellness. You can call the Facts of Life Line at 212-965-7015.

### PPNYC is on the Net!

On PPNYC's website, [www.ppnyc.org](http://www.ppnyc.org), you'll find:

- PPNYC health care services
- Sexual and reproductive health topics
- Frequently asked questions
- "Just Ask Us"—a PPNYC staff member will respond to any question you ask
- How to advocate for your reproductive rights
- Upcoming events, support groups, and trainings sponsored by PPNYC
- Volunteer and job opportunities at PPNYC

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Planned Parenthood of New York City, Inc. • Margaret Sanger Square • 26 Bleecker Street  
New York, New York 10012-2413 • Tel 212-274-7200 • Fax 212-274-7300 • [www.ppnyc.org](http://www.ppnyc.org)

A photograph of two young women in a gym. The woman in the foreground is smiling broadly, looking towards the right. The woman in the background is also smiling and looking towards the same direction. They appear to be engaged in a conversation or activity. The background is slightly blurred, showing gym equipment like treadmills.

# Knowledge Is Power!

**We hope that  
this information  
will help you  
take care of  
your sexual and  
reproductive  
health and find  
a center that is  
right for you.**

If you would like to send us comments about this guide or your experience visiting a teen-friendly center, please write:

**“Taking Care of You” • Planned Parenthood of New York City • Education Department**

**26 Bleecker Street, 3rd Floor • New York, NY 10012-2413**

**Or e-mail us at “[choicevoice@ppnyc.org](mailto:choicevoice@ppnyc.org)”**