

SO, YOU HAVE AN STD

Using STD Videos to Model Communication and Fight Stigma, Part 2

(Note: This is hour 2 of a 2 part series, and should come after “**MORE THAN CONDOMS.**”)

Objectives

By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to:

1. Identify which STDs are curable and which are managed with treatment
2. Describe what it means to live with (and have sex with someone who has) an STD
3. Demonstrate 2 ways to talk with a partner about having an STD.

Audience

Late high school or college-aged youth (ages 16-22) who have already gone through part 1 of this series, “**MORE THAN CONDOMS.**”

Time

1 hour

Rationale

Shame and stigma around STDs make talking about having one challenging. Without the ability to communicate about STDs, young people are not able to make and follow through on healthy decisions and may be put at risk of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. Teaching sexual communication skills is an important component of sex education. Classroom settings are limited in their ability to illustrate what healthy communication between partners looks like in real-life situations. Videos modeling conversations about STDs offer new and compelling ways to show teens what healthy and respectful communication looks like when young people are in sexual situations. The video on which this lesson is based is designed to help young people feel more comfortable and confident in their ability to talk about dealing with an STD diagnosis with a sexual partner. This lesson plan should come after “**MORE THAN CONDOMS.**”

Materials

- Flip chart paper or board, markers, tape
- A computer with internet access, projector, and speakers to show the video
- Educator Resources: STD Scenarios cut into cards.
- Optional: Extra pens or pencils for participants to fill out handouts.

Introduction (2 minutes)

- Tell the group that today's lesson is about how to deal with having an STD. STDs are incredibly common, so it's likely either you, or someone you have sex with at some point, will have an STD. But our culture can make it hard to talk about having an STD due to shame and stigma, so we're going to talk about what it means to have an STD, and how to talk about it with a partner.

Preventing and Managing STDs: The Basics (8 min)

1. Tell participants: "Let's talk about the things that are involved in preventing the spread of STDs. What are some of things you need to use/do to help prevent spreading STDs?" Allow participants to respond and write down their responses on the board/flip chart.

Show flip chart/white board with the following pre-written on it, and ask the group if there are any things on this list missing from the one they came up with.

STD Prevention Tools

- ✓ Abstinence from all sexual activity
- ✓ Abstinence from the most high-risk activities (i.e. anal and vaginal sex)
- ✓ Condoms
- ✓ Dental dams
- ✓ Gloves
- ✓ Lube
- ✓ Regular testing - both you and your partner
- ✓ Being honest about your status - both you and your partner

2. Tell participants: "A lot of people think preventing STDs is only about using condoms, but it's just as important to get tested (and treated if you have an STD), and to be honest about any STDs you have. Communication about STDs is really important to be healthy."

The Realities of Having an STD (15 minutes)

1. Tell the group that not all STDs mean the same thing for your life. There are two kinds of STDs - those that can be cured, and those that are managed over time with treatment. We're going to go over the most common STDs and what they mean for your life.

2. On the board or flip chart paper, write the headers “Curable” and “Treatable”
3. Let the group know that you’re going to pass out slips of paper with different STDs on them. Once they’re passed out, participants are going to bring them to the board and (with tape) place them under the header that they think it belongs.
4. Hand out the *Educator Resource: STD List* to participants in cut up slips. Make sure all STDs get handed out, even if that means some people get more than one. If you don’t have enough for everyone, have participants work in pairs.
5. Give participants a few minutes to get their slips up on the board.
6. Once all the STDs have been placed on the board, hand out the *Educator Resource: Managing STDs* so participants can see the correct answers. Have participants read through each STD out loud. As you go through the list, move any incorrectly placed items on the board to their correct category.

Disclosing You Have An STD (15 minutes)

1. Tell the group that knowing the truth about what it means to have an STD can make them less scary, but many people are still scared to hear about them and talk about them. Ask the group the following discussion questions:
 - a. What are some reasons why people might be scared to tell someone they have an STD?
 - b. What are some reasons why people might be upset when their partner tells them they have an STD?
 - c. What does our culture/society tell us about STDs and people who have them?
(Make sure to note that these ideas about STDs being dirty or different than other illnesses/infections is something we made up - there’s nothing different about them in reality.)
2. Tell the group that now we’re going to watch a video that shows how to talk about having an STD in a way that’s less scary and less shaming.
3. Show “How to Tell Someone You Have an STD” video at this link: p.ppfa.org/HaveSTDTalk, or via the playlist (p.ppfa.org/TalkingSTDs).

4. Discussion questions:

- a. What are some things people did to tell their partner they had an STD? What made those conversations a little easier for them?
Make sure at least one example is given from each scene.
- b. What kinds of reactions did people have in this video? What other reactions might people you know have to these particular conversations, if worded the way they were in this video?
Make sure at least one example is given from each scene.
- c. What are some of the positives that came out of these conversations? Where did each pair end up in terms of their relationship to each other?
Make sure at least one example is given from each scene.

Scenarios Practice (18 minutes)

1. Tell the group that now we're going to get into pairs and practice conversation skills. Arrange the group into pairs. Once they're in their pairs, explain that they'll each get 2 scenarios, and will each have a chance to practice while their partner listens.
2. Remind the group that STDs are really common, so people they know and love, maybe some people in this room, have probably had an STD at some point, or have one now. Respecting each other during this activity, and out in the world, is really important and the right thing to do.
3. Give each pair two cards from the **STD Role-Play: Scenarios** and ask the pairs to work together for 2 minutes to practice the conversations on the card. Each person in the pair will have a chance to go.
4. After 2 minutes, tell them to switch to the second card and have the other person in the pair start the conversation on the card.
5. Ask for one or two volunteers to role-play in front of the large group one of the conversations they had as a pair, and ask the following process questions after each role-play.
 - a. What went well in this role-play?
 - b. What would you have done differently?

6. Thank participants who modeled their role-plays for the group.

Process the role-plays using the following discussion questions:

- a. How did it feel to practice these conversations?
- b. How did it feel to get a negative or resistant reaction?
- c. How did it feel to have someone tell you they had an STD?
- d. What could happen if you don't bring up these topics with your partner?
(Answers may include: you could get or give someone an STD that might not get tested/treated leading to health problems down the road)
- e. What are the benefits of having these conversations?
(Answers may include: you can have a healthier and safer time together; it's the right thing to do, you build a close relationship, etc.)
- f. What could make it difficult to talk about having an STD in certain situations?
- g. What would make it easier?
- h. What will you do differently now that we've done these activities today?
- i. How confident do you feel about talking about STDs in your life?

Summary and Conclusion (2 minutes)

Thank the participants for their efforts and emphasize the following key messages:

- STDs are incredibly common - most people will get one at some point in their life.
- There's a lot of stigma in society about having an STD, but the truth is that STDs are no different than other infections/illnesses that are passed from person to person (like strep throat, mono, the flu, etc.). Having an STD doesn't make you dirty or a bad person, just like having strep or the flu or a chronic illness doesn't make you dirty or a bad person.
- Telling someone you have an STD can be hard, but it's important that you do. It's the only way they can get tested/treated and stay healthy.
- Talking honestly about having an STD can strengthen your relationship and build intimacy and trust with someone.
- The more you have these kinds of conversations the easier they get. Being honest about STDs, safer sex, and STD testing with your partner is a normal part of being sexually active.
- If you can't handle talking about this stuff with a partner, you may not be ready to have sex at all.

Educator Resource: STD List

Chlamydia

Genital warts

Gonorrhea

Herpes

**HIV
(Human
Immunodeficiency Virus)**

**HPV
(Human Papillomavirus)**

Pubic Lice

Syphilis

Trichomoniasis

Managing STDs

Chlamydia (curable) - most people have no symptoms, so you have to get tested. If you have it, you just need antibiotics from a doctor or nurse to cure it, just like strep throat. Avoid sex until you're done with treatment (about a week), and let your partner know so they can get tested/treated too.

Genital warts (treatable) - caused by HPV. These are just like warts anywhere else on your body, they just happen to be on your genitals. Like all warts, you can have them removed by a doctor or with medicine. Tell your partner if you've ever had genital warts and use condoms/dental dams.

Gonorrhea (curable) - most people have no symptoms, so you have to get tested. If you have it, you just need antibiotics from a doctor or nurse to cure it, just like strep throat. Avoid sex until you're done with treatment (about a week), and let your partner know so they can get tested/treated too.

Herpes (treatable) - can cause sores on your mouth or genitals, testing can confirm that it's herpes. You have herpes for life, but most people don't have symptoms very often. Tell your partner that you have herpes, and always use condoms/dental dams because you can pass herpes even when you don't have symptoms. Special medicine can help avoid symptoms and prevent spreading it to others.

HIV (treatable) - often no symptoms for many years, so you have to get tested. If caught early and you take medicine and take care of your overall health, you can live a long, healthy life. Use condoms and talk to your partner about PrEP - a daily pill that helps them avoid get HIV from you. If have it for years without knowing, it can lead to dangerous health problems and eventually death.

HPV (treatable) - no symptoms unless you have genital warts. It usually goes away on its own without you ever knowing you had it. A few types of HPV can lead to cancer. If your doctor says you have this kind, tell your partner, use condoms/dental dams, and get regular Pap tests to avoid cervical cancer.

Pubic lice (curable) - lice in your pubic hair that causes itchiness. If you have it, you just need medicine from a pharmacy or doctor. Avoid sex until you're done with treatment (about a week), and let your partner know so they can be on the lookout for symptoms.

Syphilis (curable) - many people have very mild symptoms, so you have to get tested. If you have it, you just need antibiotics from a doctor or nurse to cure it, just like strep throat. Avoid sex until you're done with treatment (about a week), and let your partner know so they can get tested/treated too.

Trichomoniasis (curable) - most people have no symptoms, so you have to get tested. If you have it, you just need medicine from a doctor or nurse to cure it, just like strep throat. Avoid sex until you're done with treatment (about a week), and let your partner know so they can get tested/treated too.

STD Role-Play: Scenarios

Copy and cut this page into cards. Each pair will share two cards. You may need to make multiple copies if you are working with a larger group. It's okay for multiple groups to get the same card.

<p>Scenario:</p> <p><i>At a routine check up you find out you have gonorrhea. You've been with only one partner for the last few months, though you've had other partners in the past, so you don't know who you got it from. You talk to your partner about it who's never been tested for STDs.</i></p>		<p>Scenario:</p> <p><i>You wake up one morning and your genital area is really itchy. You look in a mirror in the light and it looks like pubic lice. You hooked up with someone at a party a few nights ago. You go to the drugstore and get medicine, and then run into the person in class. You talk to the person about what happened.</i></p>
<p>Scenario:</p> <p><i>You've been with the same partner for the last year. You go to the doctor because it burns when you pee, and find out that you have herpes. You've usually used condoms with your partner but not always. You talk to your partner about your test/status.</i></p>		<p>Scenario:</p> <p><i>You have HIV, and have known about it for a while. You've gone on a few dates with someone new, and want to be honest with them about having HIV before things get sexual. You talk to the person about it after a date.</i></p>

<p>Scenario:</p> <p><i>You have herpes, and have known about it for a while. You're talking to the new person you're dating about having sex, but they don't want to use condoms/dental dams. You decide to tell them why you won't have sex without protection. Have a conversation with your partner about that.</i></p>	<p>Scenario:</p> <p><i>At a routine check up you find out you have chlamydia. You and your partner have only ever had sex with each other as far as you know. You talk to your partner about your diagnosis, and try to get to the bottom of how you got the infection.</i></p>
<p>Scenario:</p> <p><i>Your partner mentions that they've been having a burning feeling when they pee in passing conversation about feeling a little under the weather.</i></p> <p>What do you say to them about it?</p>	<p>Scenario:</p> <p><i>You've had some weird discharge and discomfort around your genitals for a few days. Your partner asks if you want to have sex one night, but you're still not sure what's going on since your doctor's appointment isn't for another 2 days. You want to be honest since you've had sex with this person before.</i></p> <p>What do you say to them about it?</p>