

# Talking to Your Providers About Sexual Health

## A CONVERSATION GUIDE

Through meaningful dialogue, rooted in shared decision-making and respect, your provider can make talking about sexual health, pleasure, and bodily autonomy, including HIV prevention, feel more comfortable and normalized.

Below are considerations, talking points, and questions to help inspire these critical conversations. **For additional resources, please go to: [bit.ly/MySexHealthTalk](https://bit.ly/MySexHealthTalk)**



### CONSIDERATIONS

- **You are the single best person to take up for yourself**, because you are the expert in your own life. Speak up and speak often.
- **Your reasons are your own** for seeking PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis), PEP (post-exposure prophylaxis), HIV testing, and other sexual health tools. Providers are encouraged to discuss PrEP with anyone who asks about it.
- **Your provider can only help you with the things they know are happening**. You can communicate your needs in the way that is most comfortable to you.
- **Your pleasure is a part of your overall health**. Sex is more than just reproductive choices and protection from STIs (sexually transmitted infections).
- **Your choices are valid** and should be respected without judgment
- **You deserve trustworthy care**. This means you can trust your provider's suggestions and that your provider considers your lived experience in those suggestions.
  - In situations where you do not feel that you are being heard or respected, it is okay to seek a different care provider, or to use resources like The Well Project to help you find other options
- **Your real-life experience impacts your health**. Sex may at times be connected to survival, substance use, housing, or money. If or when any of these are part of your sexual experience, focus and care should be given to harm reduction, not judgment.

### HOW DO I BRING THIS UP TO MY PROVIDER?

#### Sexual Activity and Health

- Are you comfortable with me asking questions about my sex life?
  - (If **YES**) - Move on to discussion points
  - (If **NO**) - Can you explain why? Are you able to refer me to someone who is?

#### DISCUSSION POINTS:

- Since my last visit I **have/haven't** had sex.
- Right now, my sex life looks like \_\_\_\_\_.
- My ideal sex life looks like \_\_\_\_\_.
- I **would like to discuss PEP**. I have had sex in the last 24 to 48 hours and am concerned about HIV exposure.\*
- The reasons I am currently engaging in sex include \_\_\_\_\_ (examples: *pleasure, stress relief, survival, money or goods, threat of intimate partner violence, housing, etc.*).
- My main reason for engaging in sex is \_\_\_\_\_.
- The parts of my body I use for sex are \_\_\_\_\_.

\*PEP (post-exposure prophylaxis) may be taken within 72 hours of a potential HIV exposure to prevent HIV acquisition.



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### HOW DO I BRING THIS UP TO MY PROVIDER? (con't)

#### STI Prevention and Testing

- I **have/have not** been tested for sexually transmitted infections (including gonorrhea, trichomoniasis, syphilis, chlamydia, herpes, HIV, and others) in the past \_\_\_\_\_ years.
  - Do you include HIV testing in your STI testing panels?
  - Is there anything I need to know about how STI/HIV testing works?
    - What types of tests are there, and which is best for me?
    - Who will perform the test?
    - How will I receive the results?
- The STI prevention methods I use are: \_\_\_\_\_ (examples: condoms, pull-out method, creams, or gels, etc.).
  - I am/am not familiar with PrEP.
  - Are you willing to prescribe PrEP for me?
    - (If **YES**) - Move on to discussion points
    - (If **NO**) - Are you able to refer me to someone who can (such as another clinic, local pharmacy, or another provider)?

#### DISCUSSION POINTS:

- Could you explain the differences between the available PrEP options (daily oral pill or long-acting injectables)?
- My hesitations about PrEP are: \_\_\_\_\_.
- If PrEP is not right for me right now, could we discuss it in the future?

#### Harm Reduction

- I **have/have not** engaged in exchanging sex for money, goods, or other needs/rewards.
- I **do/do not** have a history of injection drug use.
  - I **do/do not** know that PrEP can reduce the chance of getting HIV from injection drug use by at least 74 percent
  - I **am/am not** interested in information on substance use disorder (SUD) treatment at this time