

Taking a sexual history

A thorough sexual history can help guide provider-patient discussions about risks related to HIV, sexually transmitted infections and mental health. Taking a sexual history helps inform the physical examination, screening of exposed sites for STIs, and discussions of HIV risk.

Take a sexual history from all patients

The 5 Ps of Sexual Health

Partners

Number and gender of partners over a given time

Practices

Types of sexual practices – oral, vaginal, anal

Protection from STIs

Use of condoms and other methods

Past History of STIs

Establish risk of repeat infections, HIV status and hepatitis risk

Prevention of Pregnancy

Desire of pregnancy and use of prevention methods

For more information on taking a history for LGBTQ patients,
visit ontarioprep.ca

PrEP+talk

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Sometimes it can be embarrassing or uncomfortable to start the discussion around sexual health. It can be helpful to establish norms with the patients around sexual health questions. "I talk to all of my patients about their sexual practices."

Sample questions

Partners:

- Do you have sex with men, women, transgendered men or women.
- In the past twelve months how many sexual partners have you had?

Practices:

- In the past twelve months have you had oral sex? Vaginal sex? Anal sex?
- For men who have sex with men or transgendered women – Are you usually topping or bottoming? (top=insertive partner, bottom=receptive partner)

Protection from STIs:

- In the past six months have you used condoms for your sexual encounters? If not, are there situations in which you are more or less likely to use a condom?

Past History of STIs:

- Have you ever been diagnosed with a sexually transmitted infection, such as HIV, herpes, gonorrhea, chlamydia, syphilis or HPV? How long ago?
- When was your last HIV and syphilis test?

Pregnancy:

- Are you trying to become a parent?
- Do you want to avoid pregnancy?
- Are you practicing any form of birth control?

To assess additional risks ask:

- Have you or any of your partners been diagnosed with HIV or Hepatitis C?
- Have you or any of your partners injected drugs?

Best practices
for obtaining a
sexual history:

- Ensure a safe patient environment
- Assure the patient of confidentiality
- Be non-judgemental
- Be sensitive but matter-of-fact
- Avoid assumptions

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Adapted from the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's PrEP and PEP Action Kit