**Sexual Health**

**What is Sexual Health**

The World Health Organization defines sexual health as a state of physical, mental and social well-being in relation to sexuality. It requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, as well as the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, free of coercion, discrimination and violence.

Sexual health has many factors and includes HIV/STI (sexually transmitted infections) prevention, pregnancy prevention, reproductive health care, consent, and healthy relationships.

The National Coalition for Sexual Health have five steps for sexual health:

Five Action Steps to Good Sexual Health

1. Value who you are decide what’s right for you
2. Get smart about your body and protect it
3. Treat your partners well and expect them to treat you well
4. Build positive relationships
5. Make sexual health part of your health care routine

**Sexual Health Statistics**

***National Data***  
According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) 15-24 year olds account for half of all new sexually transmitted infections even though they only make up 27% of the population.

In 2018, 15-24 year olds were more at risk for STIs than older adults.

In 2018, the rates of chlamydia and gonorrhea increased among 15-24 year olds.

Overall, in 2018, cases of chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis increased significantly since 2014.

***University of Tennessee, Knoxville Data***  
According to the Fall 2019 American College Health Association – National College Health Assessment III:

28.1% of UT students reported using a barrier method (e.g. condoms) most of the time or always during vaginal sex within the past 30 days.

21.6% of UT students reported using a barrier method (e.g. condoms) most of the time or always during anal sex within the past 30 days.

76.7% reported having had oral sex, 73.5% vaginal sex, and 26.6% anal sex.

**HIV/STI Prevention**

The CDC recommends the following prevention methods for HIV/STIs:

* Abstinence
* Having fewer sexual partners
* Talking with sexual partners about safer sex
* Consistent and correct condom use
  + The number one reason why barrier methods (e.g. condoms) fail is incorrect use
* Getting the HPV vaccine
  + The HPV vaccination is cancer prevention. The vaccine offers protection from the 9 common strains that can result in HPV-related cancers including cervical cancer, penile cancer, and cancer of the back of the throat.
  + Gardisil 9 is the main HPV vaccine available in the United States. The HPV vaccine is recommended for females aged 9 - 26 years old and for males aged 9 - 21 years old. (For males who are at higher risk, vaccination is recommended through age 26.)
* PrEP
  + Pre-exposure prophylaxis (or PrEP) is when people at very high risk for HIV take HIV medication daily to lower their chances of getting infected. PrEP reduces the risk of getting HIV through sex by more than 90% and is even more effective when combined with consistent and correct condom use and other prevention methods. Talk to a doctor or healthcare provider about whether or not PrEP is right for you.

**HIV/STI Treatment**

Common STIs include gonorrhea, chlamydia, HPV, herpes, syphilis, and trichomoniasis. STIs caused by bacteria are treatable and curable. While HIV and STIs caused by viruses (such as herpes and HPV) are not curable, they are still treatable and manageable. HIV and STIs that go untreated can lead to severe complications.

Because many STIs do not have symptoms, or symptoms that can be mistaken for something else, it is important to get tested regularly.

The CDC recommends sexually active individuals to get tested at least once per year for HIV and STIs regardless of the number of sexual partners they may have had. Sexually active individuals at higher risk can get tested more regularly.

Medications used to treat and/or manage HIV and STIs have to be prescribed. It’s important to see a doctor or healthcare provider to make sure you are getting the right treatment.

**Pregnancy Prevention**

If you and your partner would like to avoid pregnancy, there are a variety of birth control options (also referred to as contraception). Each option has a different level of effectiveness and has its own pros and cons related to what the person using birth control needs and is looking for. It is important to choose the birth control method that is right for you.

Birth control methods include condoms, IUDs, birth control pills, the “shot,” implant, patch, and vaginal ring. Except for condoms, birth control methods do not prevent HIV/STIs.

Emergency contraception can be used when birth control methods fail. Emergency contraception options include

* Having the copper IUD (ParaGard) inserted within five days of unprotected sex
* Taking emergency contraceptive pills (Ella or Plan B) up to 5 days after unprotected sex, but the sooner the pills are taken, the better they will work.
  + Body weight also affects the effectiveness of emergency contraception pills. (If you are concerned about weight, individuals of any size can have the copper IUD inserted.) Emergency contraceptive pills are available over the counter.

**Fact Sheets & Infographics**

**Birth Control Effectiveness Chart**<https://beyondthepill.ucsf.edu/sites/beyondthepill.ucsf.edu/files/Tiers%20of%20Effectiveness_English-043019.pdf>

**Birth Control FAQs**<https://www.cdc.gov/teenpregnancy/pdf/Teen-Condom-Fact_Sheet-English-March-2016.pdf>

**Condom Fact Sheet**<https://www.cdc.gov/teenpregnancy/pdf/Teen-Condom-Fact_Sheet-English-March-2016.pdf>

**Emergency Contraception FAQs**  
<https://www.womenshealth.gov/files/fact-sheet-emergency-contraception.pdf>

**Five Action Steps to Good Sexual Health**Website: <https://www.fiveactionsteps.org/>  
Downloadable Graphics: <https://nationalcoalitionforsexualhealth.org/tools/communicating-to-the-public/asset/Social-Media-Graphics-and-Messaging_Dec2019.pdf>

**Personal Lubricant Types and Pros & Cons**<https://www.femicorp.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Screen-Shot-2016-03-06-at-12.15.13-PM-1.png>

**PrEP 101**  
<https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/pdf/library/factsheets/prep101-consumer-info.pdf>

**Resources**

**Student Health Center**  
Student Health Building, 1st Floor  
1800 Volunteer Blvd  
Knoxville, TN 37916  
M, T, Th, F: 8:00am – 5:00pm  
W: 9:00am – 5:00pm

The Student Health Center provides testing and treatment for STIs, birth control, and reproductive health care. Fees can apply if you do not have the student health insurance plan. Contact the health center at 865-974-3135

**Student Health Center Pharmacy**  
Student Health Building, 1st Floor  
1800 Volunteer Blvd  
Knoxville, TN 37916  
M, T, W, Th, F: 10:00am – 4:00pm

The on campus pharmacy offers emergency contraception to purchase. Emergency contraception is free for students who have the student health insurance plan and get a prescription for it. Contact the pharmacy at 865-974-5932

**Safer Sex Supplies**  
Free safer sex supplies can be obtained from Safer Sex & Safety Walls located across campus at

* Student Health Center
* TRECS
* Volunteer Hall

Many RAs may also keep supplies and make them available

**Sources**

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2017, February). Contraception. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/contraception/index.htm>

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Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2019, August 27). Sexually Transmitted Disease Surveillance 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/std/stats18/default.htm>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2015). STDs in adolescents and young adults. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/std/stats14/adol.htm>

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World Health Organization. (n.d.). Defining sexual health. Retrieved from <http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/topics/sexual_health/sh_definitions/en/>