



Taking Care of You

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Taking Care of You: A Teen Guide to Sexual and Reproductive Health Care

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The Teen Advocates, PPNYC's peer educators who teach fellow teens about sexual and reproductive health.

Know Your Rights

01

Do you know your rights when it comes to your sexual and reproductive health? Unfortunately, many teens don't know their rights and don't get the care or services they need because of fear and misinformation.

According to federal and New York State laws, minors (those under 18 years of age) 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"* on p. 2 of this guide.
- **Choose a clinic that will meet your needs:** Read *"Looking for a Place to Go"* on p. 4 of this guide.
- **Get high-quality care:** Read *"Is This the Place for You?"* on p. 13 of this guide.

A Message from the Teen Advocates to You

I think I'm pregnant!

I may have a sexually transmitted infection!

What will I do? What are my options?

Those words can be the scariest words a teen can say. But such questions can be answered. It's not the end of the world, even though it may feel like it is.

Where can I go?

Many of us have these questions when it comes to getting the help we need. Some of us may even be nervous about getting help because of the stories or myths we've heard about clinics, birth control, or sexually transmitted infections. But there are places you can go for real help and answers.

Teens have legal rights to confidential reproductive health care without needing permission from their parents. Sexual and reproductive health centers offer confidential (they can't tell anyone) and affordable services for teens. Many centers (sometimes called "clinics") provide services to teens for free! Many hospitals and doctors' offices also provide these services.

You may feel more comfortable with one type of provider of these services than with another. Read on for help in deciding where to go.

Taking Care of You



As a teen, there are times when you might not pay attention to what's happening inside of your body, particularly when it comes to sexual and reproductive health. Ignorance, embarrassment, and misinformation often prevent teens from taking control of their health. Well, it doesn't have to be that way. You can take control, starting with learning how to care for your body.

Taking care of your body requires becoming 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 because these problems can become more serious over time.

Both girls and guys should see a medical provider about once a year for a general check-up. You should also see a medical provider if you want birth control methods that are not available over the counter at a pharmacy.

* **Discharge** – A girl's vagina releases a liquid slippery substance called a "discharge." If the discharge is a different color than usual or foul-smelling, it can be a sign of infection. A man's penis also emits fluids, such as semen when he ejaculates ("comes") or discharge, which can be a sign of infection.



There are certain things that both girls and guys should know about their bodies. Here are some trustworthy sources on the Internet that can inform you about:



Teens' Body Changes

www.plannedparenthood.org/info-for-teens/our-bodies-33795.htm

Pregnancy

www.plannedparenthood.org/info-for-teens/pregnancy/am-pregnant-33831.htm

Birth Control

www.plannedparenthood.org/health-topics/birth-control-4211.htm

**Emergency Contraception
after Unprotected Sex**

www.plannedparenthood.org/health-topics/emergency-contraception-morning-after-pill-4363.asp

**Safer Sex and Sexually
Transmitted Infections**

www.plannedparenthood.org/health-topics/stds-hiv-safer-sex/safer-sex-4263.htm

Breast Self-Exam for Girls

www.kidshealth.org/teen/sexual_health/girls/bse.html#a_How_Do_I_Examine_My_Breasts

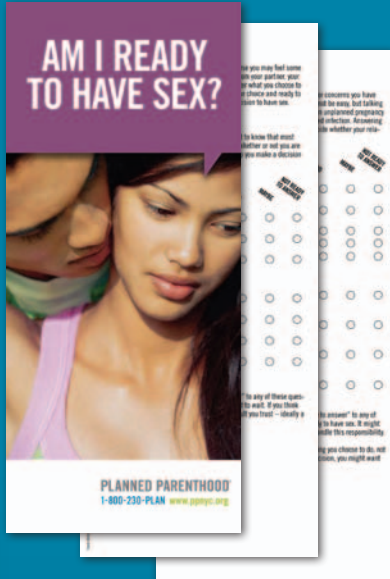
Testicular Self-Exam for Guys

www.kidshealth.org/teen/sexual_health/guys/tse.html



Looking for a Place to Go

“Am I Ready to Have Sex?”
Take the self-survey in
PPNYC’s pamphlet



[www.plannedparenthood.org/nyc/files/
NYC/ReadySex_2008ENG.pdf](http://www.plannedparenthood.org/nyc/files/NYC/ReadySex_2008ENG.pdf)

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?

How long did you wait to be seen?

How much did it cost?

Was it clean?



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 hotline or sexual health website. For a list of places you can contact to find out about services, check out "Help on Your Block: Find Services and Resources" on p. 16 of this guide. Finally, you could look online for a clinic in your area. Try to find at least two centers, so that you will have a choice.

If you are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning (LGBTQ), be sure to find a clinic where you feel safe and respected. You may prefer a clinic that is aimed at serving LGBTQ youth, or you may find a great clinic that serves all youth. Don't be afraid to call a clinic up and ask them if they have experience with LGBTQ clients. If a clinic does not treat you fairly or tells you that you don't need services, check out "Treated Badly? Here's What You Can Do" on p. 14 of this guide. Remember, you have a right to receive reproductive health services in a safe, respectful environment.

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 centers only 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:

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

What services do you need?

- Gynecological (GYN) Exam and Care
 Birth Control
 Sexually Transmitted Infection Testing and Treatment
 HIV Counseling and Testing
 Pregnancy Testing and Options Counseling
 Prenatal Care
 Abortion

Do you need free or reduced-fee services? (Many centers have free services for teens.)

- Yes No

Would you like the choice of a female or male medical provider?

- Yes No Male Female

Would you prefer a center that is specifically for teens, or one that serves all ages?

- Teens All ages

Would you like a center that is female- or male-only, or one that serves both?

- Female-only Male-only Both



Checklist (continued)

Do you need a center with staff who speak more languages than just English?

Yes No Which languages: _____

Would you like to involve your partner or bring a friend or family member with you for support?

Yes No

Do you need a place that is wheelchair-accessible?

Yes No

How soon do you need an appointment?

If you think you may be pregnant or may have a sexually transmitted infection (sometimes called “sexually transmitted disease” or “STD”), 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 (emergency contraceptive pills reduce the risk of pregnancy by 75–89 percent if started within the first 3 days after intercourse). In order for the pills to be effective, you must take them as soon as possible, no later than 5 days after unprotected sex. If you are under 17 years old, you’ll need to obtain a prescription for emergency contraception. But if you are 17 or older, you can buy it on your own at a pharmacy or a reproductive health center.

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 with you, or if that is not possible, think before you 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. If you are uncomfortable giving this information over the phone, ask if you can bring it with you and fill out the forms at the office instead.
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 you are treated, there are things that you can do. For more information, check out “Treated Badly? Here’s What You Can Do” on p. 14 of this guide.

Take **“My Method”** interactive survey to see which birth control would suit you



www.plannedparenthood.org/all-access/my-method-26542.htm



*Sliding-scale fees – Discounted fees, usually based on a patient’s income.

A Special Note about Medical Insurance

You are probably wondering if the reproductive health center will send anything to your home if you use your parents' health insurance. Because there are many different health insurance plans, each with its own policies, it is hard to give a general answer. Since most teens are covered by their parents through one of three types of health insurance, here is what we know about each of them.

PRIVATE INSURANCE

Private health insurance is insurance that individuals and families buy directly or get through their jobs.

Most private insurance companies send benefit statements (sometimes called "Explanation of Benefits" or "EOBs") or co-payment statements to the insurance holder (owner of the insurance policy). If you have private insurance, it is probably through your parents unless you live on your own. This means that for most of you, your parents will be the ones who receive any correspondence from the insurance company. These statements may reveal confidential information about your health visit or lab tests. To find out whether confidential information will be sent to your home if you use your parents' health insurance, contact the insurance company and ask about their policy on mailing EOBs and other statements. If you are not comfortable calling the insurance company directly, or are unsure what types of questions to ask, feel free to ask your doctor or another trusted adult.

MEDICAID

Medicaid is public health insurance for individuals and families who qualify. Each state has its own Medicaid program and rules.

As in the case of private insurance (see section above), most adolescents get Medicaid through their parents. In New York State, you can apply for Medicaid on your own if you are in ANY of the following situations:

- you are pregnant
- you need reproductive and sexual health services
- you do not live with your parents and are not being financially supported by your parents

Medicaid generally does not send information about your reproductive or sexual health visit to your parent(s) or partner. However, almost all reproductive health centers use outside labs, and these labs can send statements home. In addition, many New Yorkers enrolled in Medicaid are also enrolled in a managed care plan, which is a network of doctors, hospitals, and clinics you can visit. A few managed care plans may send correspondence like EOBs to your home address.

A pregnant teen can get her own Medicaid insurance. Many reproductive health centers have staff who can help you to apply for Medicaid if you become pregnant. If you don't live on your own and are being supported by your parents, Medicaid most likely covers both continuation of pregnancy and termination of pregnancy through abortion. If you do not want any correspondence sent home, you can use another address as your "mailing address." You do not need your parents' permission to apply for Medicaid if you are pregnant. 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.

If your application for Medicaid is not approved, you should ask the center how to apply for Child Health Plus (CHP). Read the section below on CHP for more information. You should also ask the center how to obtain services at a reduced fee.

A teen who isn't pregnant can also apply on her or his own for a type of Medicaid program that covers reproductive and sexual health services only.

It is called the Family Planning Benefit Program (FPBP). FPBP is available to both women and men, including teens. Many reproductive health centers can provide assistance with the FPBP application.

At the centers that do not, you may still get services at a reduced cost. If the center does provide assistance with the FPBP application, you can use a different mailing address on the application. If approved for FPBP, you can use it to cover birth control and testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections, among other reproductive and sexual health services. If the application is not approved, you should ask how to obtain services at a reduced fee. FPBP is a New York State program, so if you live in another state you should ask reproductive health centers in your area if they offer a similar program.

CHILD HEALTH PLUS

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

If you do not live on your own, and are being supported by your parents, they have to apply for you to get CHP. But if you do live on your own and are not being supported by your parents, you can apply for CHP on your own. Everyone applying for CHP must also choose a managed care plan (see previous Medicaid section for a short description of managed care plans). Because each plan has its own policy, there is a chance that EOBs could be sent to your home. Contact the managed care plan to ask the company's policies, or ask for a trusted adult's help if you do not want to call the company directly.

If you do not want to apply for or use any of the insurance programs, you can pay for services directly. Many reproductive health centers offer free or low-cost services and sliding scales for teens. Most teens are eligible for these free or low-cost services. 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.

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

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.

Security: Some centers have metal detectors as a part of their security system 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.

- Symptoms that you are having (if you came to check out a problem)
- Any other medical problems that you have now 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 to 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 keeps important information about your visit and your test results in one place.

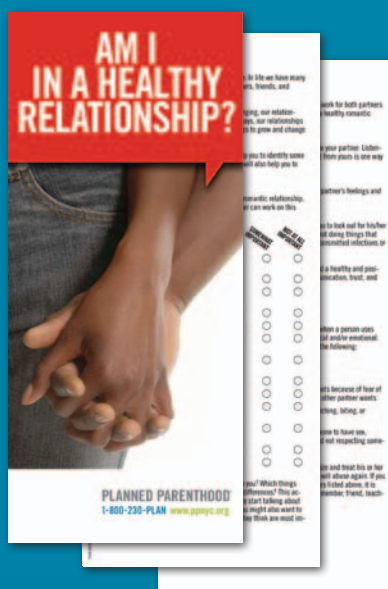
- Someone will take your weight, height, blood pressure, and blood and urine samples. These tests are done to make sure that you are in good health.

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. Don't be afraid to speak up: if a provider is making an assumption about you and what you are doing, you should either confirm that the assumption is accurate or you should correct it. This is an important chance to ask questions and get all the facts, even if you already know some things.

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 to provide the following information in the forms:
 - Reason for the visit
 - Whether you have ever had sex

"Am I in a Healthy Relationship?" Take the self-survey in PPNYC's pamphlet



www.plannedparenthood.org/nyc/files/NYC/HealthyRelation_2008ENG.pdf



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. Some 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.

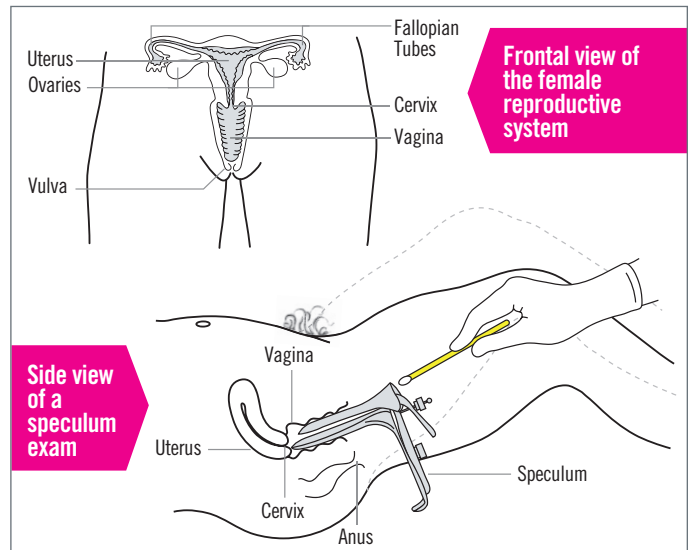
The GYN exam will begin with a breast exam. You will be asked to lie back on the examination table as the medical provider exams your breasts for lumps, thickening, and any other signs of a possible problem.

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 to 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 irritation. 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 may 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.



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Next, with the speculum still inside your vagina, the medical provider may do a Pap test to check for a sexually transmitted infection called Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) and any abnormal, pre-cancerous, or cancerous cells on the cervix. The Pap test 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 “bi-manual 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 to feel better. Also, let the medical provider know if you are feeling uncomfortable. Finally, the medical provider may put a lubricated finger inside of your anus** to check your rectum,*** behind your uterus, and the lower walls of your

***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.

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 finger is removed.

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 infec-

Take
"The Check"
interactive
survey to
see if you should get tested
for sexually transmitted
infections

www.plannedparenthood.org/all-access/check-26541.htm



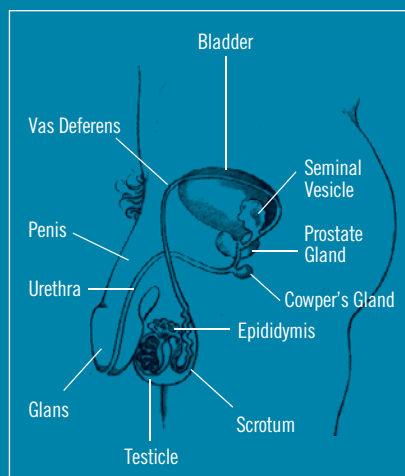
comfortable doing that, try to leave another number where you can be reached, such as a cellphone number or the number of a friend who can contact you.

tions, 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 by the end of your visit about how you will be contacted, if necessary. 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

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. Some 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 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. Next, 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 pro-



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vider should also help you to 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 provider will collect the sample by asking you to urinate in a cup or by inserting the tip of a small cotton swab (thinner than a Q-Tip) into your urethra. Ask the clinic which type of test they do when you make your appointment if you have a preference. 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.

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 the results of your lab tests). Each center has its own way of contacting patients confidentially. You should be informed by the end of your visit about how you will be contacted, if necessary. 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 cellphone 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 (which includes the vaginal lips and 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 (YUR-ree-thra)** – A thin tube that leads from the bladder to the outside of the penis or vagina.

Frequently Asked Questions about Reproductive Health Services



DO I NEED MY PARENTS' PERMISSION?

No, according to federal and state laws, you have the right to confidential services. That means no one can tell your parents. If you aren't comfortable talking to your parents, you may want to bring another trusted adult with you.

HOW MUCH DOES A VISIT COST?

Many centers provide fees on a sliding scale. That means that if you don't make a lot of money (or no money) you will have to pay very little or nothing for services. Ask for information on what you will be asked to pay when you make your appointment.

IS A GYNECOLOGICAL EXAM PAINFUL?

Some women find parts of the gynecological exam uncomfortable, but you should not feel pain. If you experience pain during the exam be sure to tell your provider so he or she can make adjustments.

WHERE CAN I GO TO GET A GYNECOLOGICAL EXAM?

Most sexual and reproductive health clinics provide gynecological exams. See pp. 4–6 and 16 of this guide for more information on finding a place to go.

AT WHAT AGE SHOULD YOU GET YOUR FIRST GYNECOLOGICAL EXAM?

Women should get their first gynecological

exam after they have started having intercourse or at age 21 (whichever comes first). If you are planning on having sex, you should see a medical provider first to talk to him or her about birth control methods. And anytime you have an unusual discharge, itching, burning, or pain when urinating on a long-term basis, you should get a gynecological exam.

CAN A GYNECOLOGICAL EXAM DETERMINE WHETHER I'VE HAD SEX OR NOT?

Generally, a medical provider cannot tell if you have had sex, unless you have a sexually transmitted infection, torn vaginal tissue, or semen in the vagina from recent intercourse. It is important to discuss with your provider if you are having sex so he or she can give you the best information for your health.

DO YOU LOSE YOUR VIRGINITY WHEN YOU HAVE A GYNECOLOGICAL EXAM? HOW ABOUT WHEN YOU USE A TAMPON?

The definition of a virgin varies among cultures and people, but neither having a gynecological exam nor using a tampon causes you to lose your virginity.

WILL THE SPECULUM USED IN A GYNECOLOGICAL EXAM STRETCH MY VAGINA?

The vaginal walls are made to stretch and then return to their original shape, like a

rubber band. A speculum will open the vagina and make it stretch during your exam, but once it is removed your vagina will return to its normal shape and size.

HOW CAN I TELL IF I HAVE A SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTION (STI)?

Some common symptoms of STIs include sores on the genitals, discharge from the penis or vagina, itching, and burning during urination. If you have these or other unusual symptoms or if you have had unprotected sex, it's important to be tested regularly and as soon as possible after you notice symptoms. But remember: many people with STIs have NO SYMPTOMS. People can get and spread infections without ever having symptoms.

SOMETIMES IT BURNS AFTER SEX. WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

There are several causes for burning after sex including an allergy or an STI. Speak with a medical provider if you have burning after sex.

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE TO CURE MY STI?

That depends on the STI. Some STIs are curable, which means you take a medication and the infection goes away. Some STIs are incurable, which means that you can take medications to help with the symptoms but you will always have the infection, and can

always pass it on to someone else, even if you show no symptoms.

I TESTED POSITIVE FOR A STI. WHAT'S THE NEXT STEP?

If you test positive for a STI the next step will depend on many things. The most important is what STI you have. If you have a curable STI you will want to follow your medical provider's treatment exactly. If you have an incurable STI you will want to talk to your provider about how you can manage your STI to reduce your symptoms. It is also important to contact your sexual partners to let them know they may have been exposed, so they can get tested. Finally, you will want to be sure to protect yourself and your partner(s) by using condoms when you have sex.

CAN A CLINIC PRINT OUT MY RESULTS (SO I CAN SHOW MY PARTNERS)?

Yes, your test results are part of your medical record. You can ask for a copy from the clinic (be sure to ask if there is a charge for the copies).

CAN YOU CATCH ANYTHING FROM ORAL SEX?

Yes, you can get a STI from performing oral sex, and in some cases from having someone perform oral sex on you. Some STIs are more likely to be transmitted by oral sex than others. To protect yourself, always use a condom or dental dam for oral sex.

ARE TWO CONDOMS BETTER THAN ONE?

No, using two condoms is actually unsafe. It may seem like if one condom protects you, then two will protect twice as much, but this is NOT TRUE. Two condoms together will rub and can cause both condoms to break,

which can leave you unprotected. Always use only one condom at a time.

IF MY CONDOM FAILS, WHAT ARE MY OPTIONS?

If a condom you are using breaks, you should immediately stop having sex. Take the condom off and use a new condom. If you are not using another form of birth control, you can take Emergency Contraception (EC) to prevent pregnancy. EC can be used up to 5 days after unprotected sex, but it is more effective the sooner you use it. For more information on EC, see pp. 3 and 6 of this guide. You should also get tested for HIV and other STIs.

IF I'M ALREADY PREGNANT, WHAT ARE MY OPTIONS?

If you think you might be pregnant, take a pregnancy test right away. If you are pregnant you have several options. You should talk to an adult you trust and your partner, if you feel comfortable, to discuss what you want to do. If you are pregnant you have 3 options:

1. Give birth and raise a child
2. Give birth and put the child up for adoption
3. End the pregnancy by having an abortion

There are many things that will determine what decision you make. The final decision rests with you. According to New York State law, you have the right to have an abortion without your parents' consent. Pregnant and parenting teens also have the right to services including prenatal care, day care, and public assistance. If you live in another state, call a local reproductive health clinic for more information.

Is This the Place for You?

How do you know if the reproductive health center you visited is the place for you?

Simple! At the end of your appointment, you should feel that you were treated well. You should also feel that you received high-quality services and that you would want to go back to the center in the future. Sometimes it's helpful to know what are considered high-quality services before making that decision.

Use the report card on p. 19 of this guide to rate the services that you received.



Treated Badly? 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 badge or card or you can 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 clear about what happened, how you felt, and how it affected your opinion of the center.

Many times people get very upset when they feel mistreated and raise their voices 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 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 Some 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. Smith 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.

» **Anthony 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 Anthony 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 who 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 badly!

9/15/10

Dear Ms. Lawrence,

I am a teenager who went to your center on 9/15/10 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

Help on Your Block: Find Services and Resources

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CARE SERVICES

- Planned Parenthood of New York City's Appointment Line 212-965-7000 or 1-800-230-PLAN (1-800-230-7526). See below for more about PPNYC health centers.
- New York City 311 Information Line (for information about teen services, clinics, sexually transmitted infections, and emergency contraception)
- New York City Youth Line 1-800-246-4646

EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION

- 1-888-not.2.late (1-888-668-2528)

WEBSITES

- www.ppnyc.org
- www.plannedparenthood.org/info-for-teens
- www.sexetc.org
- www.stayteen.org
- www.goaskalice.Columbia.edu



PPNYC Is on the Net!



Visit us at www.ppnyc.org, where you'll find

- PPNYC health care services
- Sexual and reproductive health topics
- PPNYC programs for teens
- How to advocate for your reproductive rights
- Upcoming events and trainings sponsored by PPNYC
- Volunteer and job opportunities at PPNYC

And Follow Us on:

Facebook

www.facebook.com/ppnyc

MySpace

www.myspace.com/plannedparenthood

YouTube

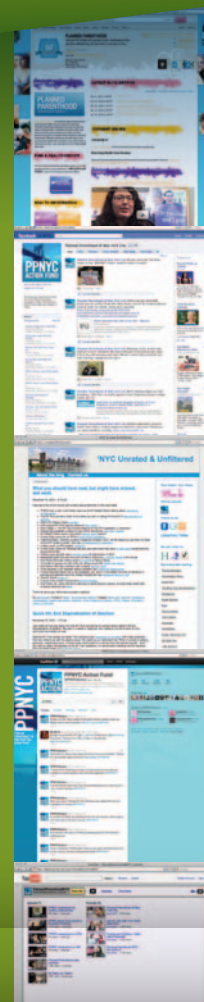
www.youtube.com/user/PlannedParenthoodNYC

Twitter

www.twitter.com/ppnycaction

Our blog 'NYC Unrated and Unfiltered'

www.unratedunfiltered.com





PPNYC Offers Special Programs for Teens



FELLAS

is a sexual health program for boys aged 11-19. The program consists of 12 sessions that provide young men with the information they need to lead sexually healthy, safe, and responsible lives. Topics covered during the sessions include: puberty, abstinence, sexual health care, sexually transmitted infections/HIV prevention, teen pregnancy prevention, paternity rights and responsibilities, healthy relationships, decision making, and goal setting. The program offers a fun and supportive environment in which young men can learn how to make healthy decisions in their lives. **Ask your teacher to bring this program to your school!**



GURLZ TALK

is a sexual health program for girls aged 11-19. The program consists of 12 sessions that teach young women the skills they need to make independent, informed decisions so they can lead sexually healthy, safe, and responsible lives. Topics covered during the sessions include: puberty, abstinence, sexual health care, sexually transmitted infections/HIV prevention, teen pregnancy prevention, self-esteem, goal setting, communication skills, decision making, and healthy relationships. The program also encourages creative expression through journal writing, poetry, affirmations, and other exciting exercises.

Ask your teacher to bring this program to your school!



THE TEEN ADVOCATES

are highly trained peer educators from the South Bronx, Brooklyn, and the Lower East Side of Manhattan. They conduct interactive theatrical performances and participatory workshops to educate young people in their communities about sexual and reproductive health and pregnancy prevention. Their skits present real-life situations that elicit lively discussion from the audience. We are proud of the success of the teens themselves—more than 90% of our Teen Advocates go on to college and many continue assisting young people by working for community organizations. Teen Advocate performances can be

scheduled from 4:00–7:00 pm, Monday–Thursday, depending on the location.

For more information about these programs, check out the “**For Teens**” section of our website, www.ppnyc.org.



Is This the Place for You?

How do you know if the reproductive health center you visited is the place for you? Simple! At the end of your appointment, you should feel that you were treated well. You should also feel that you received high-quality services and that you would want to go back to the center in the future. Sometimes it's helpful to know what are considered high-quality services before making that decision. Here is a report card that you can use to rate the services that you received.

Based on the description of what high-quality services should consist of in each category listed, grade the services that you received. After grading each category, give the center you visited a final grade. If you give the center a final grade of A or B, that's a good place to continue to visit and recommend to your friends. If you give the center a final grade of C or below, you could always find another center that will rate higher.

A = Excellent

B = Good

C = Okay

D = Poor

1. MAKING THE APPOINTMENT

The person who answers the phone and makes your appointment should be polite, patient, and able to answer your questions or refer you to someone else who can. You should be able to get an appointment right away—within a week.

How would you grade this part of your visit?

A B C D

2. THE CENTER

The waiting area and examination room should be clean and pleasant. There should be pamphlets on health issues and magazines to read while you wait. Some centers even play videos or have health education sessions in the waiting area.

How would you grade this part of your visit?

A B C D

3. STAFF

At most centers, you will see a few staff members during your visit, usually with each handling a different part of the visit. Each staff member should be polite, caring, helpful, respectful, and non-judgmental (doesn't judge you or put you down). There should always be someone available to answer your questions.

How would you grade this part of your visit?

A B C D

4. COUNSELING

(if you saw a counselor)

Counseling should be informative and helpful. Depending on why you visit a center, your counseling may include information about the exam and tests you may be given, birth control methods, pregnancy options, how to prevent STIs, and how to stay healthy. The counseling



Is This the Place for You? (continued)

part of your visit is also a time for you to ask questions and talk about any health concerns that you have. If the center you visited does not have all the services you need, you should be referred to a place that can provide those services. Talking with a counselor can get very personal. The counselor should be caring, non-judgmental, and understanding.

How would you grade this part of your visit?

A B C D

5. THE EXAM

For many people, this is the most important part of the visit. This part of the visit can also be a little awkward for some. The medical provider should try to make you feel comfortable by being patient, gentle, and understanding and answering your questions in a non-judgmental and respectful manner.

How would you grade this part of your visit?

A B C D

6. LENGTH OF VISIT

A certain amount of waiting time is common for health care visits. Some centers see patients in less than two hours while other take up to four hours.

How would you grade this part of your visit?

A B C D

Now, look at the grades you gave for each category, think about what is most important to you, and give the center a final grade.

A B C D

Write anything that you would like to remember about your visit:

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Planned Parenthood's highly trained health care professionals are here for you!

About Planned Parenthood of New York City

At Planned Parenthood of New York City, we have more than 90 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; the shot, Depo-Provera; diaphragm; intrauterine contraception; male and female condoms (and prescriptions for other options).
- 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/medication abortion
- GYN care, including screening for breast and cervical cancer
- Colposcopy, cryotherapy, and loop electro-surgical excision procedures
- Sexually transmitted infections testing, counseling, and treatment
- HIV testing, counseling, and case management (oral rapid testing available)
- Help with Medicaid and Child Health Plus applications

PPNYC has four health centers in Manhattan, Brooklyn, the Bronx, and Staten Island. 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.

Call 212-965-7000 to find out if you need an appointment for the service you want.

The locations of our health centers are:

Manhattan

Margaret Sanger Center
26 Bleecker Street
New York, NY 10012
212-965-7000

Brooklyn

Boro Hall Center
44 Court Street, 6th Floor
Brooklyn, NY 11201
212-965-7000

Bronx

Bronx Center
349 East 149th Street, 2nd Floor
Bronx, NY 10451
212-965-7000

Staten Island

Staten Island Center – opens 2011
(mobile services until then)
23 Hyatt Street
Staten Island, NY 10301
212-965-7000



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

For More Information, Contact:

Planned Parenthood of New York City
Margaret Sanger Square, 26 Bleecker Street
New York, NY 10012-2413
Tel. 212-274-7200
Fax 212-274-7300
www.ppnyc.org

PLANNED PARENTHOOD®
1-800-230-PLAN | www.ppnyc.org