

# Partner Services

**Free & confidential services** to improve your health and the health of your sex and needle-sharing partners.

## What are Partner Services?

When you're diagnosed with a sexually transmitted infection, including HIV, a health department staff person may contact you privately to offer **partner services**.

Partner services are **free and confidential services** available to people diagnosed with sexually transmitted infections (STIs), like HIV, syphilis, gonorrhea and chlamydia. These services are also available to your sex or needle-sharing partners.

In Iowa, partner services are provided by health department staff members called disease intervention specialists (DIS). DIS are trained professionals who help prevent the spread of STIs and HIV. They provide resources and information to both members of the public (you!) and healthcare providers.

Partner services include:

- ▶ Answering questions about STIs and HIV, including those about testing, treatment and more
- ▶ Helping you get the correct medicine, if you haven't gotten it already
- ▶ Helping people newly diagnosed with HIV access medical care and other services
- ▶ Confidentially notifying your sex and/or needle-sharing partners that they may have been exposed to an STI or HIV
- ▶ Helping your partners get tested and treated for STIs and HIV, if needed

The goal of partner services is to keep you, your partners and your community healthy by helping everyone access the testing and treatment they need.

## Why are Partner Services important?

### For you:

Being diagnosed with STIs or HIV can be stressful.

A DIS is a safe and knowledgeable person who can answer your questions and help connect you to more resources.

### For your partners:

- ▶ You're not required to tell a DIS about your partners, but it is highly encouraged. It's very important to inform anyone who may have been exposed to STIs or HIV. This way, your partners can decide whether they want to get tested and treated.
- ▶ Many people who have an STI, including HIV, don't notice symptoms right away. Getting treatment as soon as possible can help your partner stay healthy and prevent serious health problems.
- ▶ If your partners don't know that they've been exposed, they might develop serious health problems or give an infection to someone else.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## If I've been treated, why do my partner(s) need to be notified?

Even if you've been treated and your partner(s) don't have symptoms, it's still possible that they have an infection.

Even if you don't plan to have sex with a partner again, it's important for them to be treated so they don't pass an infection to someone else or back to you. Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV can be very serious if left untreated. People need to know if they've been exposed so they can see a healthcare provider as soon as possible.

## Who needs to be notified?

It's important to notify:

- ▶ Anyone you've had oral, anal or vaginal sex with
- ▶ Anyone you've shared needles or works with

A disease intervention specialist (DIS) will help figure out a timeframe of partners that would benefit from notification.

## Can I talk to my partners myself?

**Yes**, you can tell your partner(s) that they may have been exposed to an STI or HIV and encourage them to go to a healthcare provider for testing and treatment.

A DIS can also help you plan and practice what to say to your partner(s). If you don't feel safe telling your partner(s), a DIS can tell them and still keep your information private.

Even if you tell a partner yourself, a DIS may still ask for their information. This is so the DIS can follow up with them and answer any questions or help connect your partner to testing and treatment.

## Will the DIS tell my partners that I provided their information?

**No**. A DIS will **never share your information** with any partner(s) they speak to. This includes your name, age or when the exposure may have occurred. Iowa law guarantees that the DIS must keep your information confidential.

## What happens once a DIS has notified my partner(s)?

When a DIS speaks with your partner(s), they will notify them of the exposure(s) and help set up testing and treatment. If your partner has already been tested and treated, the DIS may still follow up with their healthcare provider to make sure your partner got the right testing and treatment.

A DIS will never tell your partner who provided their information. All conversations with a DIS are confidential, including those with partners.

## Is this a scam?

No! If you receive a message from a DIS, you can always ask to see their badge, business card or look up their contact information on the Iowa HHS website at <https://hhs.iowa.gov/sti>.

## What to expect:

DIS reach out to people in many ways. This can include phone calls, text messages, private social media messages and in-person visits.

DIS prioritize the confidentiality of your health information. They will not leave a message about or discuss personal details with anyone except you.

## For more information:

To find the DIS serving your area, view the Iowa DIS state map & contact list at:



Scan me

<https://hhs.iowa.gov/DIS-map>

—or scan the QR code above.