



For Immediate Release

March 28, 2025

Contact: Dustin Lyda

Partnership HealthPlan of California

(866) 828-2301 | press@partnershiphp.org

Your Partner in Health: **Let's Talk About STI Screening**

By Colleen Townsend, M.D.

Despite the sensitivity of the topic, it is critical to highlight the importance of screening for sexually transmitted infections (STIs). An STI is an infection caused by a virus, bacteria, or parasite that is spread through sexual contact. STIs pass from one person to another through vaginal, oral, and anal sex. While uncommon, STIs may spread through close physical contact like heavy petting. Many are familiar with some STIs such as HIV, chlamydia, and syphilis. Other STIs that are less known include mycoplasma, bacterial vaginosis, and trichomoniasis. Testing for STIs are an important step to protecting your health.

Many STIs have no symptoms or may cause mild symptoms, so it is possible to have an infection but not know it. Many STIs without symptoms cause long-term problems before a person even realizes they are infected. This is why it is important for individuals who are sexually active to have regular STI testing. Medical providers and reproductive health educators can help determine what type of screening or testing is needed.

A screening test can detect a disease even when no symptoms are present. Early detection allows treatment to begin before the condition causes significant health problems. While STIs are common, there is no standard screening for all STIs for all people. There are guidelines offered by both the [California Department of Public Health](#) and [Centers for Disease Control](#) to streamline testing based on individual risk factors for STIs. The type of STI screening a person needs is based on their risk factors.

Risks for STIs are determined by age, condom use, the number of sexual partners and the use of substances that may result in higher risk-taking activities. For example, it is known that chlamydia infections are common for individuals younger than 24 years old. A chlamydia infection may not always cause symptoms in individuals assigned female at birth but can lead to

significant health problems. The effects of untreated chlamydia include severe infection, pelvic inflammatory disease, ectopic pregnancy (pregnancy outside of the uterus), infertility and complications for newborns when the infection occurs in pregnancy. Routine screening can identify a chlamydia infection early, allowing treatment before complications develop.

Chlamydia infections have been on the rise in the U.S. over the past 15 years. In California, the increase is higher than other parts of the United States. Untreated chlamydia is easily spread during sex without condoms. Because chlamydia infection may have mild symptoms, individuals may not seek treatment, which leads to further spread of the infection. Chlamydia infections are more common in teens and young adults.

The CDC recommends yearly screening for chlamydia for all sexually active persons assigned female at birth between 15-24 years old. Individuals at higher risk includes those who are sexually active and over 25 years and are not using condoms; those with a new sex partner or with more than one sex partner; a partner who has additional partners and those with a partner who has had an STI. For pregnant individuals, it is recommended to screen in the first trimester, for all who are under 25 years old. Individuals over 25 with risk factors should also be screened.

A primary care or a reproductive health provider can help you understand your risks related to STIs and guide you through screening tests, treatments, and ways to reduce the risk of STIs.

If you are interested in finding a clinic that provides confidential and free or low-cost testing, visit the [CDC's Get Tested webpage](#).

Dr. Colleen Townsend is a regional medical director at Partnership HealthPlan of California.

About Partnership HealthPlan of California: Partnership is a community-based, safety-net health care organization that contracts with the state to administer Medi-Cal benefits. Partnership provides quality care to over 900,000 Medi-Cal members. Starting in Solano County in 1994, Partnership now serves 24 Northern California counties – Butte, Colusa, Del Norte, Glenn, Humboldt, Lake, Lassen, Marin, Mendocino, Modoc, Napa, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, Shasta, Sierra, Siskiyou, Solano, Sonoma, Sutter, Tehama, Trinity, Yolo, and Yuba. Learn more about Partnership at [PartnershipHP.org](#).

About *Your Partner in Health*: Partnership will be sharing quarterly articles on important health topics with media outlets in our service area to help our members and communities be healthy.