

AVSC International



||| STI/HIV Prevention Quick-Reference Cards for Health Care Providers
What Every Client Should Know

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AVSC International works worldwide to improve the lives of individuals by making reproductive health services safe, available, and sustainable. We provide technical assistance, training, and information, with a focus on practical solutions that improve services where resources are scarce. We believe that individuals have the right to make informed decisions about their reproductive health and to receive care that meets their needs. We work in partnership with governments, institutions, and health care professionals to make this right a reality.

Consistent with its mission, AVSC International is committed to supporting the provision of quality sexual and reproductive health services and to making a contribution to STI, HIV, and AIDS prevention efforts.

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What Every Client Should Know

STI/HIV Prevention Quick-Reference Cards

Introduction

What Every Client Should Know is a series of three cards designed to assist health care providers in counseling clients on sexually transmitted infection (STI) and HIV prevention.

With the rapid growth of HIV infections and other STIs throughout the world, it is important for providers to take advantage of all opportunities to communicate prevention messages. Health care providers are in a unique position to contribute to these efforts. Providers should make use of opportunities during their interactions with clients to discuss STI/HIV prevention, address concerns, and answer questions. For many women in particular, family planning and prenatal care visits are their only contact with the health care system and are a chance for them to receive information on the prevention of and the potential impact of STIs, including HIV infection, on reproductive health.

The cards are designed to remind providers of the key areas of information that should be discussed with every client. Providers often face serious time limitations, and these cards can help them focus on the most important information on STI/HIV prevention. Ideally, this information should be integrated into a comprehensive counseling session, since more in-depth intervention beyond simply providing basic information is generally required for behavior change.

Each card is designed to be used with a different client population:

- Family planning clients
- Prenatal care/pregnant clients
- Clients seeking general health care services

How to Use the Quick-Reference Cards

Use the cards as a reminder or reference during service delivery and counseling sessions. Once you become familiar with the information, you probably will not need to glance at the cards very often.

The information on the cards is not meant to be read to clients, but rather incorporated into your discussions with clients.

STI/HIV Prevention Quick-Reference Cards

General Health Care Clients

This card contains the key information on STI/HIV prevention that should be discussed with every client seeking general health care services. Ideally, the information should be integrated within comprehensive sexual and reproductive health counseling. (There are separate cards that address the concerns of family planning and pregnant clients.)

What are STIs?

- STIs, including HIV infection (the cause of AIDS), are infections transmitted through sex (vaginal, anal, or oral sex).
- If not treated, they can lead to serious health problems, such as infertility.
- No cure exists for HIV/AIDS, and the infection usually results in death.
- Some STIs can be passed to the baby during pregnancy, delivery, and breastfeeding, causing serious infections.
- HIV and some other STIs can also be passed through unclean injection needles, skin-cutting tools, and blood transfusions (where the blood is not tested).

How do you know if you have an STI?

Many people who have STIs have no symptoms. When symptoms appear, these may include:

- Abnormal discharge from the vagina or penis.
- Pain or burning with urination.
- Itching or irritation of the genitals.
- Sores or bumps on the genitals.
- Rashes, including rashes on the palms of hands and soles of feet.
- In women, pelvic pain (pain below the belly button).

If any of these symptoms occur, you (and any sexual partners) may have an STI and should come to the health clinic for information and treatment.

How can you protect yourself from infection?

Practice safer sex:

- Have sex only with an uninfected partner who has sex only with you.
- If this is not possible or if you do not know if your partner is infected:
 - ▲ For vaginal or anal sex, use condoms each and every time.
 - ▲ For oral sex, use a condom over the penis or plastic wrap or a condom cut open to cover the vagina or anus.

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- ▲ Engage in other forms of sexual activity, such as using your hand to stimulate your partner. (Always wash your hands immediately afterward.)

remember:

Communication between partners is important to successfully practicing safer sex. Partners can discuss issues about risk, trust, and condom use. The more partners can talk about practices that might put them at risk, the better they will be able to identify ways to reduce their risk of infection.

Other ways to reduce risk include:

- Reducing the number of sexual partners.
- Making condoms available to the partner to encourage their use in the future.
- Avoiding the use of unclean skin-cutting instruments and/or injection needles.

How to Use a Condom Correctly

Demonstrate how to use a condom correctly. Then have the client demonstrate it for you. Emphasize the importance of consistent and correct use.

STI/HIV Prevention Quick-Reference Cards Family Planning Clients

This card contains the key information on STI/HIV prevention that should be discussed with every family planning client. Ideally, the information should be integrated with comprehensive sexual and reproductive health counseling.

What are STIs?

- STIs, including HIV infection (the cause of AIDS), are infections transmitted through sex (vaginal, anal, or oral sex).
- If not treated, they can lead to serious health problems, such as infertility.
- No cure exists for HIV/AIDS, and the infection usually results in death.
- Some STIs can be passed to the baby during pregnancy, delivery, and breastfeeding, causing serious infections.
- HIV and some other STIs can also be passed through unclean injection needles, skin-cutting tools, and blood transfusions (where the blood is not tested).

How do you know if you have an STI?

Many people who have STIs have no symptoms. When symptoms appear, these may include:

- Abnormal discharge from the vagina or penis.
- Pain or burning with urination.
- Itching or irritation of the genitals.
- Sores or bumps on the genitals.
- Rashes, including rashes on the palms of hands and soles of feet.
- In women, pelvic pain (pain below the belly button).

If any of these symptoms occur, you (and any sexual partners) may have an STI and should come to the health clinic for information and treatment.

How can you protect yourself from infection?

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- Have sex only with an uninfected partner who has sex only with you.
- If this is not possible or if you do not know if your partner is infected:
 - ▲ For vaginal or anal sex, use condoms each and every time.
 - ▲ For oral sex, use a condom over the penis or plastic wrap or a condom cut open to cover the vagina or anus.
 - ▲ Engage in other forms of sexual activity, such as using your hand to stimulate your partner. (Always wash your hands immediately afterward.)

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Other ways to reduce risk include:

- Reducing the number of sexual partners.
- Making condoms available to the partner to encourage their use in the future.
- Avoiding the use of unclean skin-cutting instruments and/or injection needles.

remember:

Communication between partners is important to successfully practicing safer sex. Partners can discuss issues about risk, trust, and condom use. The more partners can talk about practices that might put them at risk, the better they will be able to identify ways to reduce their risk of infection.

How to Use a Condom Correctly

Demonstrate how to use a condom correctly. Then have the client demonstrate it for you. Emphasize the importance of consistent and correct use.

Does your family planning method protect against STIs?

Explain how the method or methods the client is interested in protect against STIs. (Also explain the option of using a condom plus another method.)

The following methods protect against HIV infection and most other STIs:

- Male condom
- Female condom

The following methods do not provide protection against STIs/HIV infection:

- Male sterilization
- Female sterilization
- IUD (IUCD)
- Oral contraceptives (pills)
- Injectables (e.g., Depo-Provera)
- Norplant implants
- Lactational Amenorrhea Method (exclusive breastfeeding)
- Fertility awareness methods (e.g., calendar method)
- Spermicides
- Diaphragm
- Emergency contraception

What Every Client Should Know

STI/HIV Prevention Quick-Reference Cards Pregnant Clients

This card contains the key information on STI/HIV prevention that should be discussed with every pregnant woman. Ideally, the information should be integrated with comprehensive sexual and reproductive health counseling as part of prenatal care.

What are STIs?

- STIs, including HIV infection (the cause of AIDS), are infections transmitted through sex (vaginal, anal, or oral sex).
- If not treated, they can lead to serious health problems, such as infertility.
- No cure exists for HIV/AIDS, and the infection usually results in death.
- HIV and some other STIs can also be passed through unclean injection needles, skin-cutting tools, and blood transfusions (where the blood is not tested).

How can STIs affect your pregnancy and baby?

- STIs can cause early labor and delivery, miscarriage, and stillbirth.
- Some STIs can be passed to the baby during pregnancy, delivery, and breastfeeding, causing serious illness or even death.

Why is it important for you to be tested for syphilis?

- If syphilis is detected early in pregnancy, it can be easily treated, and infant illness and death can be prevented. If syphilis testing is not available, refer the client to the nearest testing site.

Why should you consider HIV testing?

It is important for pregnant women to be tested for HIV because if they test positive:

- There may be treatment available to prevent transmission to the baby during pregnancy and birth.
- It is important to plan for breastfeeding alternatives (if available and feasible) to prevent transmission to the baby through breast milk.

remember:

If the woman is interested in HIV testing but it is not available on-site, refer her to the nearest testing site. If the woman is infected with HIV, she should be provided with in-depth counseling, including how to prevent transmission to the baby.

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How do you know if you have an STI?

Many people who have STIs have no symptoms. When symptoms appear, these may include:

- Abnormal discharge from the vagina.
- Pain or burning with urination.
- Itching or irritation of the genitals.
- Sores or bumps on the genitals.
- Rashes, including rashes on the palms of hands and soles of feet.
- In women, pelvic pain (pain below the belly button).

If any of these symptoms occur, you (and any sexual partners) may have an STI and should come to the health clinic for information and treatment.

How can you protect yourself from infection?

Practice safer sex:

- Have sex only with an uninfected partner who has sex only with you.
- If this is not possible or if you do not know if your partner is infected:
 - ▲ For vaginal or anal sex, use condoms each and every time.
 - ▲ For oral sex, use a condom over the penis or plastic wrap or a condom cut open to cover the vagina or anus.
 - ▲ Engage in other forms of sexual activity, such as using your hand to stimulate your partner. (Always wash your hands immediately afterward.)

remember:

Communication between partners is important to successfully practicing safer sex. Partners can discuss issues about risk, trust, and condom use. The more partners can talk about practices that might put them at risk, the better they will be able to identify ways to reduce their risk of infection.

Other ways to reduce risk include:

- Reducing the number of sexual partners.
- Making condoms available to the partner to encourage their use in the future.
- Avoiding the use of unclean skin-cutting instruments and/or injection needles.

If the client practices sexual abstinence during pregnancy or postpartum:

- It is important for her to be aware of potential STI/HIV risks when she resumes sexual activity, particularly if her partner has had other sexual partners during this period.

How to Use a Condom Correctly

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