

METHODS USED BY HEALTH DEPARTMENTS TO INFORM PARTNERS

Notifying sexual or drug injection partners that they may have been exposed to an infectious disease is formally known as partner notification.

HEALTH DEPARTMENTS USE ONE OF THREE METHODS IN THIS PROCESS:

1 PROVIDER REFERRAL Health Department Tells Patient's Partners

- Your patient provides partner contact information to the health department.
- Partners are located by health department staff and made aware of their potential exposure.
- Partners are provided, or referred for, counseling, testing, treatment, and other services by the health department.

2 SELF-REFERRAL Patient Tells Partners

- Your patient takes on the responsibility of letting sexual or drug injection partners know that they have possibly been exposed.
- Your patient provides partners with the information about local services, including counseling and testing.

3 DUAL REFERRAL Both Patient and Health Department Tell Partners

- Your patient, with assistance from health department staff, lets partners know of their potential exposure.
- Health department staff are there to help your patient during the process and provide partners with information and access to counseling, testing, and other resources.

BEST PRACTICE: The Health Department Informs Partners

When health departments take responsibility for notification, more partners are successfully notified of their possible exposure. For patients, this method helps maintain their anonymity and relieves them of the burden of disclosure.

Additionally, health departments link patients to other resources, such as counseling and risk-reduction services. For the partner who may have been exposed, this method facilitates quick access to testing and linkage to care for treatment and other services.

Patients With HIV Who Present With Gonorrhea or Chlamydia

Due to resource limitations, health departments do not always follow up on cases of gonorrhea or chlamydia. However, if a patient with HIV presents with either of these STDs, it is important that you alert health departments of this co-infection with HIV to ensure appropriate follow up with potentially exposed partners. Certain STDs can increase HIV viral load and genital HIV shedding, which may increase the risk of sexual and perinatal HIV transmission.