

Topic: Safer Sex (Including STIs)

Considerations

- Remind students that sex, in all its varieties, should always be consensual for both people.
 - Remind students what consent looks/sounds/feels like (See Topic: Consent.) as well as what is safe and unsafe touching.
- Don't impose your beliefs and values on the topics covered (e.g., people must be married to have sex).
- Use the term "STI" (sexually transmitted infection) not "STD" (sexually transmitted disease). Most STIs are curable infections, not diseases. The word "disease" has a negative connotation, suggesting that it is stuck with the person. STIs are either viral or bacterial.
- Graphic images are often used as a scare tactic for STI prevention. This is both unnecessary and potentially traumatic for some people.
- Have clinic information readily available so students can access information and health services.

Instructional strategies

Strategies to support you in covering this topic with your students could include the following:

- Discuss different options to use to prevent pregnancy (except for condoms, these do not prevent STIs):
 - IUD (hormonal and copper)
 - Contraceptive pill
 - Vaginal ring
 - Injection
 - Hormonal patch
 - Condoms (male and female)
- Discuss emergency contraception after unprotected sex:
 - Two options: IUD or emergency contraceptive pills (including the varieties available)
 - There is no need to go to the doctor for pill option, as it is available at most pharmacies/clinics.
- Discuss why condoms are good protection against both an STI and an unwanted pregnancy.
 - Condoms are one-use only and come in different varieties.

- While condoms provide good protection against an unplanned pregnancy, combining condom use with other contraception provides even better protection in case of accidents (e.g., a condom used improperly or breaking).
- Explain that while the use of contraceptives can significantly reduce the chances of unplanned pregnancies, the only guaranteed way to prevent pregnancy and the spread of STIs is not having sex.
- Tell students that as soon as they are sexually active, they should be getting regular testing for STIs, including testing for HIV (this is a blood test).
 - Some STIs don't cause symptoms. Or they cause symptoms that then go away. This is why it is important to get checked regularly.
 - STI testing is free in B.C.
 - Testing using involves a medical professional taking a sample of body fluid from the throat, inside the tip of the penis, or inside the rectum or vagina. Urinating into a medical cup and a blood test can also be parts of an STI test.
 - Testing and results are completely anonymous and confidential. Parents/guardians will not be given the information.
 - If a test shows a syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia, or HIV infection (communicable diseases that are tracked by the BC Centre for Disease Control), the local health authority will offer three options:
 1. You tell your most recent partner(s) about your test results and suggest that they get tested.
 2. You book an appointment to speak to the medical professional with your most recent partner(s).
 3. Either the health care provider or a public health nurse will contact your most recent partner(s) and tell them they have been exposed to an STI and that they need to get tested. Your name will not be mentioned.
- For the most part, treating an STI is as simple as treating an infection like strep throat. You would go to a doctor to get treatment for strep throat, and STIs are the same.
 - This is a good opportunity to talk about the dangers of stigma preventing people from getting the treatment they need.

Responding to the unexpected in your classroom

When introduced to sensitive topics in your classroom, students may occasionally disclose sensitive information or ask unexpected questions. Here are some suggestions for responding to difficult questions or situations:

- If you have a Q&A session during the lesson, students may try and “throw you off” with a comment/question.
 - Provide the class with an anonymous “Question Box” and ask them to write questions or one thing they learned that day, without writing their names. Since

everyone will be writing something, students will feel safe to ask. If possible, keep the Question Box available so that students can ask any questions that arise later.

- Remember that you can always revisit a topic at a later date if you discover a better way to answer a question.
- Provide students with specific instructions for accessing resources and support. For example, contact local health authorities to get current phone numbers and websites for resources, or show students how to get to the closest resources on foot, by bus, and so on.

Resources to Consider

The following resource links provided below are to assist educators in accessing clinical information that is the most current, accurate, and credible. All information comes from HealthLink BC – a government funded telehealth service.

- [Safer Sex | HealthLink BC](#)
- [Sexually Transmitted Infections | HealthLink BC](#)
- [Preventing Sexually Transmitted Infections \(STIs\) | HealthLink BC](#)

For questions and/or information on the types of STIs and their prevalence in BC for certain ages of students, it is recommended educators use the [BCCDC Reportable Diseases Dashboard](#).

For information on how to access free STI testing:

- [Clinics & Testing | SmartSex Resource](#)
- [GetCheckedOnline \(bccdc.ca\)](#)

Supporting Student Health: Mental Health

Notes on language

- Introduce all aspects of health: mental, physical, social, sexual. Make the connection between *physical* health and *mental* health.
- Suggest to students that taking care of their mental health is just as important as taking care of their physical health because the two things work together.
 - Use this opportunity to discuss stigma as it relates to mental illness. For example, people aren't embarrassed to seek help from a doctor when their leg is broken; but if someone thinks

