# Essential Sexual Health Questions to Ask Adolescents

Ask all your adolescent patients the sexual health questions on this card. This will help you assess your patient's level of sexual risk and determine which additional questions to ask and which preventive services are needed (other side of card).

## Ask at Least Annually

1. What questions do you have about your body and/or sex?

2. Your body changes a lot during adolescence, and although this is normal, it can also be confusing. Some of my patients feel as though they're more of a boy or a girl, or even something else, while their body changes in another way. How has this been for you?

3. Some patients your age are exploring new relationships. Who do you find yourself attracted to? (Or, you could ask, "How would you describe your sexual orientation?")

4. Have you ever had sex with someone? By "sex," I mean vaginal, oral, or anal sex. (If sexual activity has already been established, ask about sex in the past year.)

## If the Adolescent Has Had Sex, Ask About

✓ Number of lifetime partners
✓ Number of partners in the past year
✓ Gender of those partners (men, women, both, or another)
✓ Types of sex (vaginal, oral, anal)
✓ Use of protection (condoms and contraception)
✓ Coercion, rape, statutory rape, and incest

## Prepare for the Sexual History Interview

✓ Explain to a parent or caregiver that you spend a portion of each visit alone with the adolescent.

✓ Put your patient at ease. Ensure confidentiality except if the adolescent intends to inflict harm or reports being abused. Know your state's laws that affect minor consent and patient confidentiality.

✓ Incorporate the four essential sexual health questions into a broader psychosocial history.

✓ Start with less threatening topics, such as school or activities, before progressing to more sensitive topics, such as drugs and sexuality.

✓ Use open-ended questions, rather than closed-ended, to better facilitate conversation.

✓ Listen for strengths and positive behaviors and for opportunities to give praise where praise is due.

NATIONAL COALITION FOR
**SEXUAL HEALTH**

# Recommended Preventive Sexual Health Services for Adolescents

| Service | Females (Aged 13-17) | Males (Aged 13-17) |
|---|---|---|
| STI Counseling | ✓ a | ✓ a |
| Contraceptive Counseling | ✓ | ✓ |
| Cervical Cancer Screening | | |
| Chlamydia Screening | ✓ b | ✓ c |
| Gonorrhea Screening | ✓ b | ✓ d |
| HIV Testing | ✓ | ✓ |
| Syphilis Screening | ✓ e | ✓ e |
| Hepatitis B Screening | ✓ f | ✓ f |
| Hepatitis C Screening | ✓ g | ✓ g |
| Hepatitis A Vaccine | ✓ | ✓ |
| Hepatitis B Vaccine | ✓ | ✓ |
| HPV Vaccine | ✓ | ✓ |
| PrEP | ✓ * | ✓ * |

## If the Adolescent Identifies as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning (LGBTQ)

✓ Ask whether they have a trusted adult to talk to.

✓ Assess safety at home and school and whether they are being bullied or harassed.

✓ Link your patient to community or national organizations such as **pflag.org** or **thetrevorproject.org** for education and support.

✓ Counsel about using condoms and contraception. Adolescents who identify as lesbian or gay may also have sex with members of the opposite sex, which increases the risk for unintended pregnancy.

**a** = All sexually-active adolescents

**b** = Sexually-active women aged ≤24; women aged ≥25 at increased risk

**c** = Consider screening young adult males in high prevalence communities or settings

**d** = At least annually for sexually-active MSM at sites of contact

**e** = HIV-positive; at increased risk: exchange sex for drugs or money; in high-prevalence communities

**f** = At risk: HIV-positive, unprotected sex, injection drug users, MSM, family member or sexual partner infected with HBV; born in a HBV-endemic country; born to parents from a HBV-endemic country

**g** = At risk: past/current injection or intranasal drug use, long-term hemodialysis, born to mother with Hepatitis C, unregulated tattoo

**\*** = HIV-negative and at substantial risk for HIV infection (sexual partner with HIV, injection drug user, recent bacterial STI, high number of sex partners, commercial sex worker, lives in high prevalence area or network) weighing at least 35 kg

For more information, visit: **nationalcoalitionforsexualhealth.org**