



# 10 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT SEXUAL HEALTH

- 1 Sexual health is part of your physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health.** Being sexually healthy means being positive and respectful about sexuality and relationships. It also means having the possibility of enjoyable, safe sexual experiences that don't involve force or violence.
- 2 Use condoms to protect yourself from STIs.** Use condoms for vaginal, anal, and oral sex. Dental dams can also be used for oral sex. Remember that you are only protected where you're covered. Birth control pills will not protect you from STIs. Use a condom even if you or your partner is on the pill.
- 3 Stay healthy by getting tested for STIs.** STI tests are not usually routinely offered. **Talk to your healthcare provider** and ask to get tested, especially:
  - If you have had unprotected sex.
  - If you or your partner are sexually active but have not been tested.
  - Before you have sex with a new partner.
  - If you have any signs or symptoms of an STI.
  - If you were forced to have sex or you think you have been.If you have an STI, your healthcare provider can tell you what your treatment options are.
- 4 You can prevent unplanned pregnancies.** Pregnancy can happen if you are sexually active. Both women and men are responsible for deciding when to have children and for preventing unplanned pregnancies. Use condoms combined with another method of birth control, such as the birth control pill or intra-uterine device (IUD) to prevent STIs and unplanned pregnancy. Talk to your healthcare provider to find out what birth control is best for you.

If you have had unprotected sex and want to prevent pregnancy, you can take emergency contraception (also known as the "morning after pill"). It is available over-the-counter at most drugstores. It can only be taken up to 72 hours after unprotected sex and should not be used as your regular method of birth control.
- 5 If you are pregnant or think you might be, you have options.** Making a decision about your pregnancy can be difficult. Talk to your healthcare provider. They are responsible for giving you information about your options—such as continuing with the pregnancy, adoption, and abortion—without judging you. They are also responsible for supporting the decision you make.



