

What is partner notification?

Partner notification is designed to help patients who have been diagnosed with an STI to inform their sexual partner/s of the infection, thus enabling their partner/s to obtain tests and treatment. This process increases infection detection and reduces onward infection and re-infection.

Who do patients need to inform?

- Their current sexual partner/contact
- Any other current or most recent sexual partners/contacts
- If the patient does not have a current sexual partner, their last sexual partner/contact

BASHH produce full guidance on look-back intervals for specific STIs; a summary is below. www.bashh.org.uk

Infection	Suggested 'look-back intervals' If no sex in look-back interval, then last sexual contact
<i>Gonorrhoea</i> – Men with urethral symptoms <i>Gonorrhoea</i> – All others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 weeks prior to/since onset symptoms • 3 months prior to presentation Refer to GUM for antibiotic susceptibilities
<i>Chlamydia</i> – Men with urethral symptoms <i>Chlamydia</i> – All others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 weeks prior to/since onset symptoms • 6 months prior to presentation
<i>PID and epididymo-orchitis</i>	According to infection detected OR 6 months if none
<i>Trichomonas Vaginalis (TV)</i>	4 weeks prior to presentation
<i>Mycoplasma genitalium</i>	Current partner
<i>Pubic lice</i>	3 months prior to/ since onset of symptoms
<i>Scabies</i>	Close contacts 2 months prior to/since onset of symptoms
<i>HIV, Hepatitis B and C, Syphilis</i>	Partner notification done by health advisors in GUM, look-back interval tailored to individual patient's clinical picture
<i>Genital warts (HPV), Genital herpes (HSV)</i>	N/A

Helping patients to inform their sexual contacts

Patients may be reluctant to inform sexual partners because of concerns about how their partner may react, or because they feel upset their partner may have infected them. Offer the following:

'What should I tell my partner?'

- ✓ Give the patient an information leaflet & contact slip/letter about the infection to pass on to their contact/s
- ✓ If necessary, give the contact details of GUM clinic or other provider who can give further advice.

'He/she must know they have an infection'

- ✓ Explain their contact may not know they have a problem; they may have no symptoms
- ✓ Give the patient an information leaflet about the infection to pass on to their contacts
- ✓ Give information about GUM clinics, which can give further advice

'I need help to tell my partner / I haven't got time now / I need to think about it'

- ✓ Refer to GUM

'I don't want to contact them; I'm not going to tell my contact(s) and I don't want anyone else to'

- ✓ Give GUM contact details and clinic times
- ✓ Ask the patient to call GUM if they change their mind
- ✓ Discuss with GUM if you are concerned

A patient needs to know:

- That their sexual partner(s)/contact(s) may be unaware that they may have an infection
- That their sexual partner(s)/contact(s) need tests and maybe treatment to prevent re-infection
- The possible consequences of an untreated infection
- Which infection has been identified – provide an information leaflet/text & contact slip/letter about the infection for patient to pass on to their partner(s)/contact(s) – as they need to know about the infection as well
- To abstain from sex until they and partner(s)/contact(s) have completed treatment
- Make sure they have condoms to protect themselves in the future
- Infection may have come from years ago – it is not appropriate for the clinician to imply (or try to 'prove') where the infection was acquired. All STIs can be transmitted from someone who has NO symptoms

Take contact telephone number of patient (preferably mobile), so you can contact them for follow-up of adherence with treatment and partner notification.

Check with the patient about any communication restrictions – e.g. 'is it OK to leave a message?'