

# Take Charge of Your Sexual Health

You've got the tools you need to stay fit, healthy and prepared.  
You just need to use them.

What does it mean to be sexually healthy? It means keeping your body as **healthy** as possible, having a **satisfying sex life**, and maintaining **positive relationships**. It means avoiding sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unintended pregnancies. It also means having **access to the information and services** you need to make this possible.

## Sexual health is about...

- **You.** Knowing who you are as a sexual being, understanding your own sexual desires, and embracing your sexuality.
- **Your health.** Taking steps to protect your health and prevent infections and unintended pregnancy (if relevant), and getting regular care and screening.
- **Your relationships.** Building healthy and positive relationships built on mutual respect.

Sexual health is an important part of your overall wellbeing—it has an impact on your physical, mental and emotional health as well.

Taking care of your sexual health can prevent possibly serious health problems—affecting your life and your ability to serve. Make sexual health care part of your regular healthcare routine.

## When should I talk to a healthcare provider?



- If you're sexually active, you should be screened regularly for STIs. **You can't count on symptoms to know if you have an STI.** For active duty military, women are screened annually for chlamydia and gonorrhea, while both men and women are screened every two years for HIV.
- If you have **any symptoms that are concerning**, like discharge, pain during urination, bumps or sores, or anything that is new or concerning, talk to a healthcare provider. **Be honest about your concerns** (they've heard it all before!)

# What are some ways you can protect your sexual health?



## Remember Prevention

Condoms are the only widely available, proven method for **reducing your risk for STIs**.

Condoms have the added benefit of **preventing unintended pregnancy**. For those concerned about pregnancy, there are long-term, highly effective (or reliable) options, like an implant or IUD, that can prevent pregnancy for years. As a member of the military, you're entitled to these options.



## Be PrEPared

PrEP—pre-exposure prophylaxis—is a tool to prevent HIV. One pill a day can reduce the risk of infection by 92%. And **PrEP is available to you through military health services**. Ask a healthcare provider about PrEP and be prepared to prevent HIV. (And if you're HIV positive, effective therapy can prevent you from passing on HIV.)



## Get Vaccinated

Most military members will get vaccines at basic training and when deployed. But there's one vaccine you might not have received—the HPV vaccine. **HPV—human papillomavirus—is a sexually transmitted virus related to several types of cancer, including cervical and anal cancer, and genital warts**. If you haven't received it yet, ask about it.



## Communicate

Talk to your sexual partner(s) about your desires, boundaries, and safer sex practices. This applies to **both on-going relationships and more casual hook-ups**—communication is key to making your needs and limits known.

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## Where can I learn more?

- American Sexual Health Association: [www.ashasexualhealth.org/military](http://www.ashasexualhealth.org/military)
- Navy Marine Corps | Sexual Health and Responsibility Program: [http://bit.ly/Navy\\_Marine\\_SHARP](http://bit.ly/Navy_Marine_SHARP)
- Army Public Health: [http://bit.ly/Army\\_STD\\_HIV\\_Prevention](http://bit.ly/Army_STD_HIV_Prevention)
- National Sexual Health Coalition: [www.fiveactionsteps.org](http://www.fiveactionsteps.org)