Responsibilities in a sexual relationship - Contact tracing

This activity has been designed to increase student familiarity with the NSW Health Play Safe website.

Suggested duration: 50-60 minutes

Crossroads outcomes

1.2 Critically analyse situations, attitudes and behaviours that influence health, safety and wellbeing in different contexts.

2.2 Recognise and respond appropriately to situations which may be harmful to self and others.

2.3 Evaluate the skills and actions that could be used in various situations which promote health, safety and wellbeing of self and others.

7.1 Identify appropriate sources of support.

Crossroads content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal identity – Owning yourself</th>
<th>What do we want students to know, understand or be able to do?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self awareness</td>
<td>• Understand the importance of STI testing as part of healthy sexual relationships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility for self and actions</td>
<td>• Understand contact tracing and their responsibilities in a sexual relationship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships – Owning yourself</td>
<td>• Develop positive decision making skills regarding their sexual health.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing and maintaining respectful relationships</td>
<td>• Increase awareness of services available to assist in contact tracing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Managing intimate relationships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– rights and responsibilities in various contexts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexuality and sexual health – Owning yourself</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe and ethical behaviour</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Safe and ethical behaviour</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– respect for self and others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– effective communication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– sexual health care</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexuality and sexual health – Responding to others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information and services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Overcoming barriers to accessing services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teaching notes

Like many other groups within our society, many young people find it difficult to seek the help they require to enhance their own health, safety and wellbeing. In relation to accessing health services, there are often perceived and actual barriers that prevent young people from receiving medical care.

In a community where sexually transmitted infection (STI) rates are increasing, we need to engage young people in discussions about responsibilities for managing their own sexual health and if necessary, notifying past/current partners through contact tracing.

It is imperative to educate young people not only about STI’s, but also about testing and communicating with past/present partners about their sexual health. Through this activity, students explore the concept of contact tracing and their rights and responsibilities in regard to sexual health.

Content discussed in these activities may be confronting for some students. It is important to establish a safe and effective classroom environment, where ground rules are clearly communicated. It is essential that students are encouraged to listen to and respect the values, beliefs and opinions of others.

Teachers and Executive should be guided by the Department's advice document *About sexuality and sexual health education in NSW government schools* when planning and implementing any sexuality or sexual health education lesson. This document provides guidance regarding curriculum delivery within the framework of NSW Department of Education and Communities policies and processes.

Information and a self paced professional learning resource to build the skills of teachers to effectively implement the Taking Up a Position activity can be accessed on the *Teaching Sexual Health* website.

More information regarding STI rates, STI testing procedures and contact tracing can be found in the *Teacher Fact Sheet*.

Required resources and materials for preparation

- Taking up a position teaching considerations (for teacher use)
- Access to the NSW Health Play Safe website
- ‘Taking up a Position’ continuum cards

Activity one – Taking up a position activity (10-15 minutes)

It is important that teachers refer to the teaching considerations before undertaking this activity.

- Place the position cards; strongly agree/agree/disagree/strongly disagree around the room or on the floor in correct order to create a continuum

- Introduce the ‘Taking up a Position’ activity to students, highlighting the main messages and processes.
  - There is no right or wrong answer in this activity.
  - Students are free to change their mind and position at any time.
The classroom is a judgement free space where all opinions are valued and individual differences should be respected.

Students should share thoughts not feelings.

Everyone should use inclusive and appropriate language.

- Explain to students you will read out a series of statements related to sexual health and STIs.

- Once students have thought about the statement they should move to the position card that best represents their thoughts about the statement i.e. do students strongly agree/ agree/ disagree/ strongly disagree with the statement?

- Provide students with adequate time to think about the statements and take a position.

- Sample statements:
  - School is the main source of education for young people regarding sexual health.
  - Young people know enough about sexually transmitted infections and blood borne viruses to keep themselves safe.
  - STI testing is widely used by young people in Australia.
  - Condoms are the easiest way for young people to protect themselves from STIs.
  - If an individual finds out they have an STI they have a responsibility to contact all past and present partners.

- After each statement is read out and students have positioned themselves, invite students to share their thoughts about the statement. Try to ensure a range of views are discussed. Ask students:
  - What was your thinking when you moved to the position of strongly agree/ agree/ disagree/ strongly disagree?

- To avoid all students standing in one position, invite a small number of students to volunteer to position themselves on the scale from the perspective of:
  - an adult such as a parent
  - a medical professional such as a doctor or nurse
  - someone of the opposite sex
  - someone of another age, culture, religion or sexuality.

At the end of the activity, it is important to debrief with students and discuss the difference between people’s values based upon our previous experiences, background, exposure to the media, education, peer group and family unit. Sample questions include:

- Do you think everyone should share the same values and attitudes? Why/ Why not?
- What factors do you think contribute to your own personal values and attitudes?
- How did other people’s views differ to your own?
- Why do you think people’s values and attitudes differ?
- What factors do you think have the most influence on your values and attitudes?
- How did this activity influence your thoughts and/or attitude towards STIs and sexual health care?
What did you learn from this activity?

**Activity two – What is contact tracing? (10-15 minutes)**
- In small groups, students explore information on contact tracing on the [Play Safe](#) website. This could be done individually prior to the lesson if access to technology in the home environment is more available than the school environment.

- Within their small group, students record:
  - What is the purpose of contact tracing?
  - Who needs to be told if you test positive for an STI?
  - What are the various ways of communicating to your past and current sexual partners that you have tested positive for an STI?

- As a whole group, discuss the importance of contact tracing and the options for young people.
  - What are the benefits of contact tracing for the individual and the community?
  - Why is it important to have various options for contact tracing?
  - What might influence which option a young person chooses to inform a partner of a positive STI test? (e.g. long term partner vs short term or past partner, concern about sharing information in writing).
  - What method of communication do you think most young people would choose to use for the purpose of contact tracing? Why?

**Activity three – Scenarios (10 minutes)**
- Introduce students to the [Let Them Know](#) website. The Let Them Know website has been developed by the Melbourne Sexual Health Centre to help people who have been diagnosed with Chlamydia, Gonorrhoea, Syphilis and other STIs to tell their sexual partners that they might also be at risk. The website provides four scenarios of sample conversations had by people telling their sexual partners that they might be at risk.

- In small groups, students explore the sample conversations by accessing the [Let Them Know](#) website.

- Within their group, students discuss the four scenarios and the different reactions of various individuals. Discussion questions could include:
  - Which scenario do you think was the best and why?
  - For each of the scenarios, which individuals do you think reacted in a positive way and who reacted in a negative way?
  - For those individuals who reacted negatively, what do you think might be some reasons behind them reacting in this way?
  - What did the individual with the STI diagnosis do that made the conversation less confronting or easier for them and/or the partner involved?
  - How does the way an individual communicates this type of information impact on the way that it is received, e.g. what they say and how they say it?
What are the potential benefits of an individual receiving and reacting to this information in a positive way?

- As a whole group, invite students to share the scenarios and their responses.

**Extension activity - Putting it into practice (5-10 minutes)**
- Teachers can extend students’ knowledge and understanding of contact tracing by developing their skills in communication and negotiation.
- Students construct an STI contact tracing conversation in pairs and engage in practical conversations experiencing both of the different roles of sender and receiver.

**Conclusion (5-10 minutes)**
- As a whole group, ask students to reflect on the following questions.
  - Why is contact tracing an effective method in reducing the spread of STI’s?
  - What skills do individuals need for contact tracing to be effective?
  - How can an individual take responsibility for their own sexual health i.e. be proactive?
  - What skills do individuals need to be proactive in regards to their sexual health?
  - Why is it important for an individual to seek support for his or her own sexual health?
Teacher fact sheet – Contact tracing

STI rates
Rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) continue to rise for some age groups, including young people. The true number of STIs in Australia is unknown, as many people who have unprotected sex haven’t been tested for STIs.

The risk of STI transmission increases when:
- people engage in sexual behaviours without using condoms or dams
- people engage in sexual behaviour with multiple sexual partners.

The Fifth National Survey of Secondary Students and Sexual Health (2013) involved over 2000 Year 10, 11 and 12 students. It found that:
- STI knowledge remains poor, including knowledge about chlamydia.
- HIV knowledge is high and knowledge of knowledge of possible symptoms of STIs was somewhat better than 2009.
- The majority of students surveyed (69%) have experienced some form of sexual activity, including deep kissing and oral sex.
- The large proportion of students had never experienced sexual intercourse.
- The proportion of students who had experienced sexual intercourse increased with age, with 50% of Year 12 students indicating they had experienced sexual intercourse.
- Around 40% of students had experienced oral sex.
- Around six out of ten students (63%) believe ‘most’ or ‘all’ of their peers use a condom when they have sex.
- The majority (59%) of sexually active students reported using a condom the last time they had sex.
- Of those students who indicated they were sexually active, 23% had sex with three or more people in the past year.

STI testing
STI testing should be part of an individual’s sexual health care routine. Many young people have misconceptions about STI testing. This increases the importance of including testing in any sexual health education program to support messages around safer sexual behaviour, protective strategies and accessing health care services.

The main reasons identified by young people to stop them from getting tested for STIs include:
- don’t need to test because they trust their partner
- worried about boyfriend/girlfriend’s reaction
- don’t see the benefits of testing
- think that testing for an STI is embarrassing
- don’t think friends would think testing is important
- worried about parents reaction.
Some practical reasons why young people may not test for STIs include:

- lack of knowledge of treatments
- unsure of where to get tested
- fear and anxiety about medical tests
- worried people will know if they got a test
- concerned testing is too expensive
- worried that staff will judge.

**Who should have an STI test?**

STI tests are recommended for people who:

- are confident they are ready to engage in sexual activities
- are starting a new relationship
- think they might have an STI
- have had unprotected sex, that is sexual intercourse (vaginal or anal) without a condom or oral sex without a condom or dam
- have a partner who has had previous sexual partners or another sexual partner
- have shared injecting equipment.

**What does an STI test involve?**

Where young people are familiar with the process involved, it can reduce anxiety and increase confidence to access services more often. It is important that young people understand that having an STI test is simple and painless.

Qualified medical professionals at youth services, GP and medical centres, sexual health services and family planning centres conduct STI tests. Some services will require a Medicare card and young people should ask if one is required when making appointments.

Medical professionals are encouraged to ask questions about STI testing as part of any consultation with young people.

Young people should be aware that in a consultation it is common for the medical professional to ask questions about:

- sexual orientation
- number of sexual partners
- sexual practices
- whether they have any symptoms
- whether they have ever injected drugs
- whether they have piercings or tattoos

There are many tests that can be involved in STI testing. These include a urine sample, blood test, vaginal swab, anal swab, throat swab or physical examination. The test is dependent on the STI being tested.
Cost
Many services that offer STI testing are bulk billed through Medicare. Young people will require access to a Medicare card to utilise these services. Young people when making an appointment should confirm costs and bulk billing.

Confidentiality and other matters
Confidentiality is an integral component of STI testing. Medical professionals are legally obliged to keep information that a patient gives them confidential, regardless of their age.

However, if there are issues that raise concerns about patients under the legal age of consent (16 years of age), then the doctor may take steps to ensure their safety. The health care provider uses information collected at the service to address any health needs.

Getting the results
Test results normally take about a week to come back. If the results indicate the presence of an STI (positive results) it is necessary for the person to inform sexual partners so they can also be treated and tested. This is called contact tracing. If this does not occur, then reinfection will result.

The medical professional may treat the young person before the results come back.

In some instances health care providers will need to share information with external agencies. Examples include:
- Notifiable diseases such as chlamydia, gonorrhoea, hepatitis, syphilis and HIV.
- Promote to health of other people
- Involvement in health studies
- Used as evidence in criminal matters or other legal investigations.

Contact tracing
Contact tracing involves communicating information with past and/or present sexual partners where an individual receives a positive result on an STI test. This can help to reduce the spread of STI’s as previous/current partners can be tested and access treatment if required.

There are two main options when disclosing this information:
- Tell them in person (or over the phone via text or email).
- Get someone else to do it for you – this can be your doctor or a service such as Let Them Know.

The ‘Let Them Know’ service is run through the Melbourne Sexual Health Centre and is supported in NSW by the NSW STI Programs Unit. This service can notify past and/or current partners anonymously. Access at Let Them Know.
Taking up a position cards

(Teacher can photocopy, cut out and laminate).

AGREE

DISAGREE
STRONGLY AGREE

STRONGLY DISAGREE
## Taking up a position activity – Teaching Considerations

### KEY MESSAGES
- Create a safe and supportive environment
- Share thoughts not feelings
- There are no right or wrong answers
- Respect each other’s differences
- Feel free to move or change your mind
- Use appropriate and inclusive language.

### DO
- Set boundaries and expectations
- Use inclusive language
- Listen to what students are saying
- Encourage everyone to share thoughts rather than feelings
- Rephrase student thoughts without judgement
- Thank students for sharing
- Use the ‘teachable moment’
- Invite analysis
- Reflect questions back to students
- Use other situations to expand values continuum
- Invite students to move if they change their minds

### DO NOT
- Give research or facts
- Judge the student
- Show your opinion
- Try to change values or beliefs
- Give advice
- Pressure students to share their thoughts