**Why would someone want to avoid getting an STD?**

* *It can be hard for people to know that they have an STD, and if they have it for a long time it can damage the body. STDs can cause damage to organs such as the heart and brain, and can harm the reproductive system.*
* *Some STDs can be cured and some cannot.*
* *STDs are the leading cause of infertility and are especially dangerous if a woman is pregnant. They can cause miscarriages and birth defects.*
* *Some STDs, such as HIV, can cause death.*
* *Some STDs are easy to get rid of. If a person gets tested and treated right away, the STD won’t hurt the body.*
* *Finding out you have an STD can be emotionally difficult. It can be embarrassing and uncomfortable. Telling partners you may have gotten an STD from them, or given them an STD, can be a really hard conversation.*

**People can get an STD by…**

* *The most common way to get an STD is by having sex without using a condom with someone who already has the STD.*
* *Some STDs, including HIV, can be spread by sharing needles.*
* *Some STDs, including HIV, can be spread from mother to baby, through pregnancy, childbirth or breastfeeding.*
* *People cannot get HIV or other STDs from casual contact such as holding hands, sharing drinks or kissing.*
* *Having more sexual partners increases the chances that a person  could catch an STD*

**People might think they have an STD if…**

* *They have symptoms. STDs usually don’t cause symptoms. But, if they do, these are the most common: sores; unusual discharge from the vagina, penis or anus; itching; pain when urinating; a rash, redness or swelling in the genital or anal areas.*
* *A partner has an STD and tells them, or they learn from someone else that a previous partner has an STD.*
* *They have had unprotected sex with someone who has ever had unprotected sex with anyone else.*
* *The only way to know for sure is to get tested.*

**If people think they might have an STD, they should…**

* *Stop having sex with other people until the STD is cured. If the STD isn’t curable—for example, HIV—they should use condoms every time they have sex.*
* *Go to the clinic for testing and treatment.*
* *Tell anyone they have had sex with to also get tested.*

**People can reduce their risk of giving or getting an STD by…**

* *Not having sex.*
* *Using a condom every time if they do have sex.*
* *Not sharing needles.*
* *Getting tested for STDs regularly.*
* *Knowing that you can’t tell if people have HIV or other STDs by looking at them. There are many people who have HIV or other STDs but don’t know it.*