



# Enteric Disease Sexual History Interviewing Toolkit

Enteric pathogens are spread through the fecal-oral route and **can be spread through sexual activities**. Sexual transmission of enteric pathogens has been associated with oral-genital and oral-anal sex.

## Why collect sexual history information?

Collecting sexual histories allows us to better **monitor** enteric disease trends, **identify and prioritize** vulnerable groups, **recognize** sexually transmitted outbreaks sooner, and **educate** affected individuals and communities about disease prevention.



You can't **identify** sexual transmission if you don't **ask** about sexual behavior.

## Which pathogen interviews should include sexual history questions?

Common enteric pathogens for which sexual transmission has been documented include: *Shigella*, Hepatitis A, *Campylobacter*, *Giardia*, *Cryptosporidium*, *E. coli* and *Salmonella*.

## Who should be asked sexual history questions during these interviews?

Fecal-oral transmission can occur during sexual practices regardless of sex, gender, sexual identity, race, ethnicity or age; if sexual history is collected for a pathogen, **all** adults should be asked.

## Which sexual history questions should be asked and why?

### Asking about:

- Any sexual partners
- New sexual partners
- Ill sexual partners
- Where partners were met

### Can inform:

- Thorough exposure ascertainment
- Assessment of new exposures
- Provide education and assess for outbreaks
- Case finding and focus prevention messages



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- Resources for asking sexual history questions:**
- [Taking a Sexual History Video](#)
  - [Examples of Sexual History Questions](#)
  - [Tri-County Health Taking a Sexual History Video](#)
  - [Talking to Patients about Sensitive Topics: Techniques for Increasing the Reliability of Patient Self-report](#) (NIDA/NIH)

**Consider including scripting on case investigation forms to facilitate asking sexual history questions and practice asking them:**



**Ask permission:**  
*“Next, I would like to ask you some questions about recent sexual history. We ask all adults these questions, regardless of age, gender, or marital status. Is it ok if I ask you these questions?”*



**Acknowledge sensitive nature and assure confidentiality:**  
*“I know these questions are personal but your answers are important for helping us understand and prevent this illness, and will be kept confidential.”*

**Define sexual contact:**  
*“Sexual contact includes genital sex, anal sex, oral sex, or any contact with a penis, vagina or anus.” Consider describing further, for example: “penis in the vagina”, “penis in the anus”, “mouth on penis, vagina, or anus.”*



**Begin with open-ended questions:**  
*“Did you have sex of any kind in the (insert time frame here) days before you became ill?” and “What were the genders of your partners?”*

**Convey respect and open-mindedness when asking these questions**

**Partner with colleagues in STI/HIV programs to:**

- Identify inclusive, non-stigmatizing language
- Develop sexual history questions and scripting
- Practice interviewing
- Develop effective education and prevention messages
- Obtain expertise around multidrug resistant *Shigella* among men who have sex with men

**Additional resources:**

- [CDC’s \*Shigella\* Prevention and Control Toolkit](#)
- [CDC’s Guide to Taking a Sexual History](#)
- [CDC’s \*Shigella\* Hypothesis Generating Questionnaire](#)

Visit our website for more interviewing resources and sign up for our listserv to receive info on upcoming training and events!

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