PART 3:  
HOW TO PROVIDE STI TEST RESULTS

When an individual receives a positive result, providers are required by law to provide treatment or refer the patient to treatment. 

*When providing positive test results, discuss partner notification strategies. For syphilis and HIV, your local health department can help.*

Discuss risk reduction when delivering positive or negative test results.

HIV positive test results must be given in person.

Preliminary HIV positives must be confirmed.

Contents:

- Positive STI Results
- Positive Syphilis Test Results
- Syphilis: Interpreting Results
- Positive HIV Test Results
- Key Messages For women Regarding Cervical Cancer Screening
- Management of Sex Partners for HPV
- Negative STI Results
Example Script for Delivering Positive Test Results

"Your test result was positive, which means that you have a chlamydia/gonorrhea infection.

The good news is that this infection is easily treatable with an antibiotic medication. It is important that you take all of the medication. Do not save it or share it with anyone else, or the infection might not be treated completely.

If left untreated, this STI can cause serious health problems, and may increase your risk for acquiring HIV.

Chlamydia/gonorrhea infection is spread by having vaginal, anal, or oral sex. It is also important that any current partners are treated for chlamydia/gonorrhea infection before you have sex with them, or they could pass the infection back to you. It is important that you do not have any sex until you and your sex partners have been adequately treated. This means 7 days after a single dose treatment or after completion of a 7-day treatment.

I recommend you get retested three months after treatment to make sure you’re not reinfected.

I encourage you notify any partners that you have had sex with in the past two months and encourage them to get treated for chlamydia/gonorrhea. If it has been longer than two months since you last had sex, you should contact your most recent partner. We can discuss several options for partner notification, and it can be done anonymously. This is important because if your current or past partners do not get treatment, they can infect other people with whom they have sex."

Expedited Partner Therapy (EPT) – Certain providers can now offer their patients diagnosed with chlamydia or gonorrhea the option to deliver prescriptions or medications to their sex partners, if those partners are unlikely to seek care. See page 65 for more information on EPT in Maryland.
Example Script for Delivering Positive Test Results

"Your test result was positive, which means that you have a syphilis infection.

The good news is that this infection is easily treatable with an antibiotic medication. [If oral treatment provided: It is important that you take all of the medication that I give to you. Do not save it or share it with anyone else, or the infection might not be treated completely]. You should get tested again in three to six months to make sure the treatment was effective. If left untreated, syphilis can cause serious health problems in men and women. A pregnant woman with untreated syphilis can pass the infection to her baby. Syphilis can cause premature birth, stillbirth, and, in some cases, death shortly after birth. Untreated infants that survive tend to develop problems in multiple organs, including the brain, eyes, ears, heart, skin, teeth, and bones.24

The symptoms of syphilis are divided into three stages. In the primary stage, you may notice a single or multiple small painless sores, which usually appear where the syphilis entered the body, like your penis, rectum or mouth, and last for 3 to 6 weeks. In the secondary stage, a rash will develop, usually on the palms of the hand or soles of feet, although it may occur anywhere. You may also feel sick during this time, like you have the flu. The symptoms from this stage will go away whether or not you receive treatment. Without the right treatment, your infection will move to the latent and possibly late stages of syphilis."
Example Script for Delivering Positive Test Results Cont.

"The latent stage of syphilis begins when all of the symptoms you had earlier disappear. If you do not receive treatment, you can continue to have syphilis in your body for years without any signs or symptoms. Most people with untreated syphilis do not develop late stage syphilis. However, when it does happen, it is very serious and would occur 10–30 years after your infection began. During this stage, you may become paralyzed, you may be confused or have other mental disorders, and your organs may stop working, resulting in death. For this reason, it is very important that you treat the syphilis infection, even if you do not feel sick right now.

Based on what we have talked about, I believe that you are in the _________ stage of syphilis.

Syphilis infection is spread by having vaginal, anal, or oral sex. It is important that you do not have any sex until seven days after you have finished taking your medication. It is also important that any current partners are treated for syphilis infection before you have sex with them, or they could pass the infection back to you.

There are people at the health department who are trained to notify the sex partners of people who test positive for a syphilis infection that they may have been exposed, and to offer testing and treatment to the sex partners, if needed. The health department staff can do this anonymously, without using your name. The health department staff will contact you to offer their assistance. I strongly encourage you to take advantage of their help since if your current or past partners do not get treatment they can re-infect you or infect other people."

Remember: Assure that all patients diagnosed with syphilis, or suspected of having syphilis, are evaluated for ocular and neurological symptoms (see page 122 for an Ocular Syphilis and Neurosyphilis Screening Guide).
SYPHILIS: INTERPRETING RESULTS

Based on CDC recommendations

Click here for topics associated with this algorithm

INDICATIONS FOR TESTING
Suspected syphilis:
- Classic lesions present
- Suggestive STI history
- Current STI

PERFORM NONTREPONEMAL TESTING *
Rapid Plasma Reagin (RPR) with Reflex to Titer

Reactive

CONFIRM WITH TREPONEMAL TESTING
Treponema pallidum Antibody by TP-PA

Reactive

Nonreactive
Nonreactive test result suggests false-positive
False-positive RPR may be caused by:
- HIV
- HSV
- Malaria
- IDU
- SLE
- RA
- Pregnancy
- Leprosy
- Endemic treponematoses

Syphilis likely; stage disease using:
- Sexual history
- Syphilis treatment history
- Physical exam

Primary stage:
- Oral chancre
- Genital chancre
- OR
Secondary stage:
- Rash
- Condyloma lata

Treat according to CDC guidelines

REPEAT TITERS
- Rapid Plasma Reagin (RPR) with Reflex to Titer

4-fold decline in titers at 12 months

Yes
Cure

No
Treatment failure or re-infection; follow recommended guidelines

Consider retesting in 3-
12 months if patient remains in risk category


* May order Treponema Pallidum (Rapid Plasma Reagin) with Reflex to Titer and TP-PA Confirmation – includes nontreponemal testing and treponemal confirmation

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Courtesy STD/HIV Prevention Training Center at Johns Hopkins
Example Script for Delivering Positive Test Results

Inform patients of results in person in a private area. For a conventional/laboratory blood-based test, you might say: "Your test result is positive, which means you have HIV."

For a reactive preliminary positive result on a rapid test, you might say: "Your test result is preliminary positive. This means you most likely have HIV. We will not know for sure if you are infected with HIV until we get the results from your confirmatory test. This will require a blood draw. However, it is very likely (99%) that that test will also be positive. It will take about 1 - 2 weeks to receive these results."

After the delivery of a positive test result, allow the patient time to process the information. If the patient’s emotional state allows them to hear and understand you, you might ask the following questions:

Questions to ask before the patient leaves:

- How are you feeling?
- What are your questions?
- What will you do after you leave here today?
- Who will you talk to about this?

Information you might share with your patient at this time includes: "This is a serious infection, but people today are living longer healthier lives with medication that can keep the immune system strong. Knowing you have HIV can help you take precautions to prevent passing it to others. Medical care, medications and support are all available and are usually covered by medical insurance or state funded programs."
POSITIVE HIV TEST RESULTS CONT.

Next Steps

Connect patient to medical treatment

Connect patient to partner notification services (see page 63)

Report case to health department (see page 62)

Remember:

Do not forget to discuss risk reduction when delivering positive OR negative test results. Refer to Risk Reduction Counseling on page 79 for assistance.

Maryland law requires providers to report HIV infections. Refer to Mandatory Reporting of Positive STI Results on page 62 for more information.

Linkage to Care for HIV Infected Individuals

For patients who test positive, initiate care immediately. If you or someone in your provider group does not provide HIV care, link the patient to an HIV primary care provider. For HIV providers, go to www.aahivm.org or www.baltimorepc.org. Your local health department provides linkage to care services and social and support services, such as partner notification services, for HIV positive patients.

Retention in Care for HIV Infected Individuals

Reassure patients that adherence to antiretroviral (ART) medications will allow them to live a long and productive life. The belief that HIV infection quickly leads to death can hinder patients’ motivation to change high-risk behaviors such as unsafe sex and needle sharing.

For more information on HIV screening, linkage to care, and resources for patients and providers in Baltimore City, please refer to Provider Resource Guide: Information about Routine HIV Screening in Baltimore. (2014), the Protect Baltimore Campaign: Baltimore, MD. Available from [http://jhcchr.org/resources/]
KEY MESSAGES FOR WOMEN REGARDING CERVICAL CANCER SCREENING\textsuperscript{26,27}

- Cervical cancer can be prevented with regular screening tests, like the Pap test and the HPV DNA test (HPV test). All women should start getting regular Pap tests at age 21 years.

- The Pap test can find abnormal cells on a woman’s cervix, which could lead to cervical cancer over time, and an HPV test detects HPV infection of the cervix. The HPV test can be used at the same time as the Pap test (known as “co-testing”) for women aged ≥30 years. The HPV test also can be used after an inconclusive Pap test among women aged ≥25 years; testing for this purpose is known as “reflex HPV testing.”

- Positive Pap and HPV tests are markers of early signs of cervical cancer, which often does not cause symptoms until it is advanced. Appropriate follow-up is essential to ensure that cervical cancer does not develop. All women, even those who feel healthy, should receive screening for cervical cancer.

- HPV is a common infection and is often cleared from the body without any medical interventions. A positive HPV test does not mean that a person has cancer.

- HPV is often shared between partners and can lie dormant for many years; having HPV does not imply infidelity, nor should it necessarily raise concerns about a partner’s health.\textsuperscript{16}
MANAGEMENT OF SEX PARTNERS FOR HPV\textsuperscript{17}

The benefit of disclosing a positive oncogenic HPV test to current and future sex partners is unclear. The following counseling messages can be communicated to sex partners:

- Sex partners might already have HPV despite no visible signs of warts, so HPV testing of sex partners of persons with genital warts is not recommended.
- Sex partners tend to share HPV, even though signs of HPV such as an abnormal Pap-test result might occur in only one partner. Sex partners of persons with HPV infection also likely have HPV.
- When used correctly and consistently, condoms might lower the risk for HPV infection. However, HPV can infect areas not covered by the condom and might not fully protect against HPV.
NEGATIVE STI TEST RESULTS

Example Script for Delivering Negative Test Results

"Your test result was negative, which almost always means you do not have a sexually transmitted infection."

[For Rapid and ELISA HIV Screen with possible exposure in past three months].

"However, the test may not show recent infection within the past three months. To be certain that you do not have HIV, I recommend getting another test three months after your last exposure. Can I help you figure out when that would be? We can make an appointment for you based on that.

Oral, vaginal, and anal sex can put you at risk for contracting HIV or an STI. Many STIs do not have any symptoms, which means you may not feel sick, but the infection can still cause serious health complications in men and women.

As long as you are sexually active and have new partners, you should get screened for STIs at least annually [more frequently if the patient engages in high-risk sexual behavior such as unprotected sex, multiple sex partners, anonymous sex partners or exchanging sex for money or drugs]."

If your patient tests negative for HIV, but is engaging in high risk sexual behavior, consider recommending HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) to your patient. More information about PrEP can be found at www.prepmaryland.org.

Remember:

Do not forget to discuss risk reduction when delivering positive OR negative test results. Refer to Risk Reduction Counseling on page 79 for assistance.