

FREQUENTLY

Asked

QUESTIONS

About Receiving Reproductive Health care



Visiting the doctor can be daunting if you've never spoken to a healthcare professional about your sexual health. The following Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for youth in Texas will guide you to the process and provide you with key resources and knowledge that will help you receive the best care.

How to Use This Document

Below you'll find this FAQs' Table of Contents. You can click on a major topic or a specific question to be guided to the answer. At the bottom every page, you'll see this arrow The arrow will always bring you back to this page so that you can quickly find the answers you need.

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BEFORE THE VISIT

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

What care can I consent to or give permission for (without an adult)?

Minors can consent to:

- Emergency care
- Screening and treatment of contagious and reportable diseases, including STIs such as chlamydia, syphilis, and HIV
- Prenatal and delivery care related to pregnancy
- Some immunizations if pregnant or parenting
- Counseling for suicidal ideation, chemical addiction or dependency, and sexual, physical, or emotional abuse



Other medical services and treatments may require caregiver consent.

If you are under 18 and need a prescription medication, you must obtain medical consent from a designated medical consenter or seek court authorization to be your own medical consenter.

There are some exceptions where people under the age 18 can consent to all medical care, including if legally emancipated, married, serving in the armed forces, pregnant (except for abortion), confined in an adult prison (except for abortion), and if they are 16 or older and managing their own finances.

Can I choose if I want to be on birth control or not?

Yes! Whether or not you want to be on birth control and which method you want to use is entirely your choice.

Caseworkers cannot attempt to prohibit you from seeking contraceptive services, and you may request them from your healthcare provider. It is your healthcare provider's responsibility to determine if adult consent is required.





You cannot be punished for seeking out contraception. However, some foster families may not agree with your decision to seek out birth control, and they are not obligated to help you get it. In this circumstance talk to your caseworker.

Also, no one can force you to take birth control. It is your right to say “NO.”

What birth control can I get without adult consent?

You do not need adult consent to acquire non-prescription contraceptives like condoms, spermicides, and emergency contraception (the morning-after pill).

You can get free condoms at any [Title X Clinic](#) or sometimes even your healthcare provider.

You do not need consent from another party, including your caregiver or foster parent, to obtain contraception if you visit a Medicaid/STAR Health provider or a Title X Clinic.

Who can help me get contraceptives if I don't want to ask my foster parents?

Talk to your caseworker and ask to see your healthcare provider. Your healthcare provider will help you decide if you are a good candidate for birth control and discuss what consent you may need to obtain.

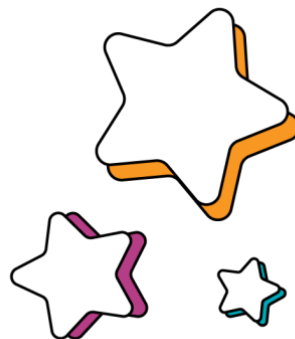
You can access free or low-cost confidential reproductive health services, including contraceptives, at a [Title X Clinic](#).

You do not need consent from another party, including your caregiver or foster parent, to obtain contraception if you visit a Medicaid/ STAR Health provider or a Title X Clinic.

How can I get help with transportation to the doctor/clinic?

Your caseworker or a trusted adult may be able to help you with transportation.

You can also [contact SafeRide](#), Superior Health's medical ride program that provides transportation to non-emergency health-care appointments for STAR, STAR Health, STAR Kids, and STAR+PLUS members* who have no other transportation options. These trips





include rides to the doctor, dentist, hospital, pharmacy, and other places you get Medicaid services.

Can I keep my birth control/contraceptives with me?

DFPS policy states that any prescription medication, including contraceptives that are taken regularly (e.g., birth control pills), must be kept in a secure and locked location at all times and only administered by the caregiver. This means you are not allowed to keep your prescription contraceptives. Instead, your foster parent, CPS nurse, or prescription medication manager in your group home or residential treatment center is required to store them for you and will give them to you as prescribed.

Long-acting birth control methods (e.g., IUDs or implants) are inserted by a healthcare provider. In this case, you don't have to take medication daily.

What can I do if I feel discriminated against?

You have the right to be treated with respect regardless of race, skin color, place where you were born, religion, sex, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, ability, immigration status, financial status, health status, or parental status. If you feel discriminated against, talk to your social worker, attorney, or the Foster Care Ombudsman:

- Call 844-286-0769, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m., Monday - Friday
- If you have a hearing or speech disability, call the toll-free Relay Texas service at 7-1-1 or 800-735-2989
- [Submit your question or complaint online](#)

What sexual and reproductive health services are available to me?

- Sexual health screening, exam, and counseling
- STI testing and treatment
- PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis)
- Condoms
- Pregnancy prevention counseling
- Testicular cancer screenings
- Well Women Exams (pap test for ages 21 and older)
- Menstrual cycle concerns (heavy, irregular, or painful)
- Breast exams
- Pregnancy testing, prenatal care, and pregnancy services
- Information and consultations on prescription and non-prescription contraceptives





Can I choose my doctor?

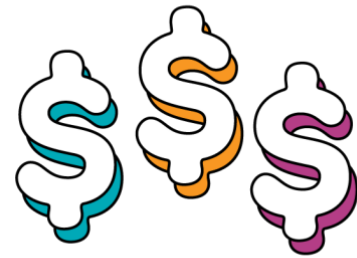
Yes. Your caregiver or caseworker may recommend someone, but it is your right to choose your medical provider.

You may want to consider the different types of healthcare providers and the different services they each provide, such as pediatricians, adolescent health providers, OB/GYN, and family practice providers. These providers may or may not be Title X providers, so if confidentiality is your priority, ask your provider whether they are a Title X provider.

AFFORDABILITY

How will I pay for it if I have no money?

If you are in foster care, you have access to Medicaid or STAR Health, which entitles you to full coverage for most sexual and reproductive health services. We encourage you to ask your provider before you receive any services. **For any coverage questions, you can reach out to STAR Health Member Services at 1-866-912-6283**



Minors have the best guarantee of receiving confidential low-cost or free reproductive healthcare at [Title X Clinics](#). [Learn how to schedule an appointment at a Title X Clinic](#).

If you are aging out of care, you may still be eligible to keep your STAR Health benefits until you are 21. [Talk to a transition specialist](#) to help you stay up to date. More information can be found on the [Star Health website](#).

Where can I get free condoms?

Free condoms are available at many health centers. Talk to a trusted adult who can help you identify a health center to visit. You may also find free condoms at most [Title X Clinics](#).

What can I do if I feel I've been wrongly charged for a service?

Talk to your healthcare provider about the expected cost. If there is a discrepancy, ask them to clarify any questions you may have or contact their billing department.





You can contact STAR Health Member Services at 1-866-912-6283 for additional help, or talk to your caseworker, CASA, or attorney for guidance. You can also ask your healthcare provider if they have a health advocate available to help you navigate any problems.

PRIVACY

Will my doctor visit be confidential? Can I ask them to explain what they will keep confidential?

Before you accept any services, you have the right to ask your healthcare provider to explain what their policies are on confidentiality and what they may need to report. Your provider will ask your parent/guardian to step out of the room before they ask you questions or do an exam.

Any person that is enrolled in their state's Medicaid program (including STAR Health) and seeing a Medicaid provider is guaranteed confidential access to sexual and reproductive health services by federal law, which includes any sexual health visits and all types of birth control, even for people under the age of 18. However, there are limitations to confidentiality, including:

- **Reporting requirements** for abuse, suicidal ideation, and some contagious STIs.
- **Treatments on healthcare passport:** If you are using STAR Medicaid to pay for your services, note that treatments or services may show up on your healthcare passport and your medical consentor or caseworker may have access to it.
- **Prescription medication:** If you are prescribed medication, including contraceptives, your foster parent, CPS nurse, or staff in your group home or residential treatment center is required to store them for you and will give them to you as prescribed.



Minors have the best guarantee of receiving confidential reproductive healthcare in a [Title X Clinic](#).

Will my parent/foster caregiver find out about my clinic visit?

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Minors have the best guarantee of receiving confidential low-cost or free reproductive healthcare at Title X Clinics.

DURING THE VISIT

What should I expect during my visit?

It is always a good idea to call and ask this question when making an appointment. Experiences may differ based on provider and clinic setting, but generally:

1. You can expect to spend about 50-60 minutes at your appointment. Complex cases may require more time to coordinate the most adequate care.
2. When you arrive, you will check in with the front desk staff and fill out some paperwork. These forms cover basic information about yourself and your health history. The forms also help the provider see if you qualify for any program to make your visit discounted or free. Front desk staff are happy to answer any questions you might have about the forms you are asked to fill out.
3. Next, you will be taken into either an exam or counseling room, depending on the service you are being seen for. The staff will take your vital signs (height, weight, blood pressure, etc.) as needed and ask you some basic questions. These questions will help your care team know how they can best help you.
4. The healthcare provider will start by asking more detailed questions about your health history and concerns/symptoms if you have any. Depending on the reason for your visit, you may be asked to do a physical exam and any tests, such as a urine sample.
5. If you are asked to do a physical exam, the staff will provide you with instructions on undressing and putting on an examination gown. Your healthcare provider should explain every step of the exam and ask for consent





at every step. You can always ask them to stop for any reason or ask them to explain what they are doing and why. You also have the right to request a chaperone to be in the room during the exam if another person is not already scheduled to do so.

6. In other cases, your healthcare provider may just want to chat with you, clothes on. You will be given an opportunity to speak with the staff about any concerns you have and ask as many questions as you would like. The staff will provide you with information on next steps and how to get results of your examination if you had one.
7. Once your visit is over, you will check out. This will be the time to pick up any supplies or prescriptions and schedule any future visits. It is also the time the front desk will collect payment. Depending on the treatment you received and type of clinic you visit, you may be asked to pay with your insurance (such as STAR Health/Medicaid), cash, debit, or credit. Staff may also provide you with information on any special programs to make your visit more affordable.



What do I need to bring with me?

- Identification
- Insurance card
- Cash or debit or credit card if you expect to pay out of pocket
- Proof of income if you are inquiring about low-cost or free services
- List and dosages of any other medications you are taking. If you take multiple medications, it may be easier to bring the bottles or a digital record from your pharmacy if available.

What questions should I ask when making an appointment?

- What are the different services you provide for teens?
- Do many teens come to this clinic?
- Will I have to pay for this visit? Do teens have to pay?
- If a payment is required, how much will I pay?
- Do you accept Medicaid/STAR Health?
- Will Medicaid cover the cost of the visit?
- Will Medicaid cover any prescriptions?
- Are my records confidential? Can my foster parent or social worker get access to my records?
- What are the clinic hours?





- Do I need to make an appointment, or does the clinic accept walk-ins?
- Do I make an appointment online or by phone?
- Who can I bring to the clinic visit with me?
- Is the clinic accessible by public transportation?
- If this is my first sexual health exam, will someone explain to me what to expect before the exam begins? (*Feel free to ask someone from the care team to explain what to expect*)

What will the healthcare provider ask me and why?

The healthcare provider will ask you a set of questions to learn more about you, your medical history, and the reasons for your visit. It may be that you've already told some of the information to other people, but it is important that the healthcare provider hears this information directly from you and can ask follow-up questions. It is the only way to make sure that they understand your concerns and help you come up with a good healthcare plan.

You may be asked about:

- Basic information – name, birth date, contact information
- Your medical history
- Reasons for your visit
- Your symptoms (if any)
- Your sexual history
- Your mental health, nutrition, and physical activity
- Your drug or alcohol use (as these may affect treatments)
- Your experiences with abuse or intimate partner violence
- Your last menstrual cycle (if applicable)
- Past pregnancies (if applicable)
- Your lifestyle



What questions should I ask during the visit?

- What exactly is going to happen during this visit?
- Who else will be or can be in the exam room?
- How long will this visit take?

Contraception:

- What are my choices for birth control?
- What's going to happen when I use birth control?





- How do I use this method?
- What are some side effects of this contraception method?
- What happens if I miss a dose? (If applicable)
- If I think something is wrong, who do I contact?

Prescriptions:

- How do I get my prescription?
- How do I get a prescription refill?

Testing:

- How do you do this test?
- How long does it take to get results back?
- How will I get the results? Can I choose how you contact me?
- If the test comes back positive, will you contact my partner/parent/guardian/caseworker/foster parent?

Can I choose what contraceptives I want?

Yes, but some providers may not provide all methods and they may need to place it on a special order or refer you to a provider that has your preferred method.

Can I choose how to receive follow-up communication or results?

Yes! Your care team should give you the option of how you receive communication related to your visit based on the clinic's policies. Some communication platforms limit the ability to protect your health information, so discuss your preferences with your care team beforehand.

AFTER THE VISIT

What if I have side effects or questions, who can I ask?

Clinics have different ways for you to stay engaged with your care team and healthcare provider after the visit, including online patient portals. Patient portals are safe, secure online platforms to communicate any questions or concerns you have with your healthcare provider after your clinic visit. You can also view lab results, schedule appointments, and review your personal health information using the portal from a smartphone or computer. Not all clinics have patient portals, so you can call the clinic





as needed. When you see your healthcare provider, you may be provided with other contact information should you have side effects or questions. If you don't receive information on ways to stay connected about your health matters by the end of your visit, you may ask someone from your care team.

Can I change my mind about taking prescription medication?

You have the right to change your mind about any treatment plan. You are free to choose which medications you want to take or not. However, your caregivers in the foster care system are required to abide by certain recommendations to ensure your wellbeing. Speak to your healthcare provider and caseworker before making any decisions and if you have any questions or concerns about side effects. If you feel your concerns are not being valued by the healthcare provider, consider seeking a second opinion, if possible, to meet your health needs.

GLOSSARY

Consent

Consent means giving permission for something to happen or agreeing to do something. In this resource, consent refers to the ability to agree to receive medical care. Patients have the right to receive information and ask questions about treatments so they can make decisions about their care.

Parental Consent

Texas law gives all parents the duty of providing medical and dental care to their children. This duty gives parents the explicit right to consent to medical and dental treatments on behalf of their children, as well as the right to access the child's medical records. In general, if a minor requires medical attention, a Texas physician should obtain the consent of one of the child's parents or the legal consentor.

For youth in foster care, the State operates as the managing conservator and will legally designate a medical consentor for the minor.

There are some exceptions when a minor can consent to their own medical care, including sexual and reproductive healthcare. These exceptions are explained in the section [Knowing Your Rights](#).





Minors

A minor is a person under 18 years of age who has never been married and never been declared an adult by a court.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality means that anything you share will remain private. Confidentiality is one of the core duties of medical practice, and healthcare providers are required to keep a patient's personal health information private unless consent or permission to release the information is provided by the patient. In some cases, your provider may be legally obligated to report or release information you provided in confidence if they are worried about your or someone else's safety.



Healthcare Provider

In this resource, the healthcare provider is the person treating your medical condition and can be a physician, nurse practitioner, or physician assistant.

Youth-Friendly Health Services

Youth-friendly health services emphasize confidentiality, provide flexible hours and affordable fees, and offer a wide range of services.

Title X Clinics

Title X Clinics provide counseling and education about sexual and reproductive health. Clinics also offer contraception, testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy diagnosis and counseling, and cancer screening.

Title X Clinics provide sexual and reproductive healthcare regardless of the client's ability to pay, insurance status, age, immigration, or citizenship status, or possession of a government-issued ID. Minors may consent to their own confidential care at a Title X Clinic. There are approximately 200 Title X Clinics across Texas.

- [Find a Title X Clinic near you.](#)
- [Learn more about how to access services at Title IX Clinics.](#)





Pregnancy Prevention

Birth control (or contraception) is any method, medicine, or device used to prevent pregnancy. There are many different methods to prevent pregnancy, including

- **Hormonal** methods like the IUD, the pill, and the implant;
- **Barrier** methods like diaphragms and internal and external condoms; and
- **Traditional family planning** methods.

You can learn more about the different methods, their efficacy and what is right for you by visiting one of the resources below.

- [Birth Control – Talk About It Dallas](#)
- [Birth Control - Planned Parenthood](#)

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)

STIs are infections that are passed from one person to another during sexual activity. Anybody who has oral sex, anal sex, vaginal sex, genital skin-to-skin contact, or who shares sexual fluids with another person can get STIs. Common STIs are trichomoniasis, HPV, herpes, gonorrhea, chlamydia and bacterial vaginosis.

STD vs. STI

The terms STD and STI (sexually transmitted disease/infection) are used interchangeably but are different. An STI is an infection, much like any stomach bug or cold, and is the step before the disease. If caught and treated early, some infections (STIs) can be prevented from developing into a disease (STD).

STI Prevention

Using internal or external latex or polyurethane condoms and dental dams can significantly reduce the risk of contracting or spreading an infection. You can also reduce your risk of getting an STI by reducing your number of sexual partners. The only guaranteed protection against STIs is abstaining from sexual activity or only having sex with one STI-negative partner.

For more information on STIs and STDs and how to prevent them visit the resources below. It is important to remember to get tested often and seek treatment immediately if you test positive for an STI.

- [Uncovering STIs - Talk About It Dallas](#)
- [What Are STDs? - Planned Parenthood](#)



