

## Fall 2020 GYT Frequently Asked Questions for Parents/Caregivers

### 1. What testing is available?

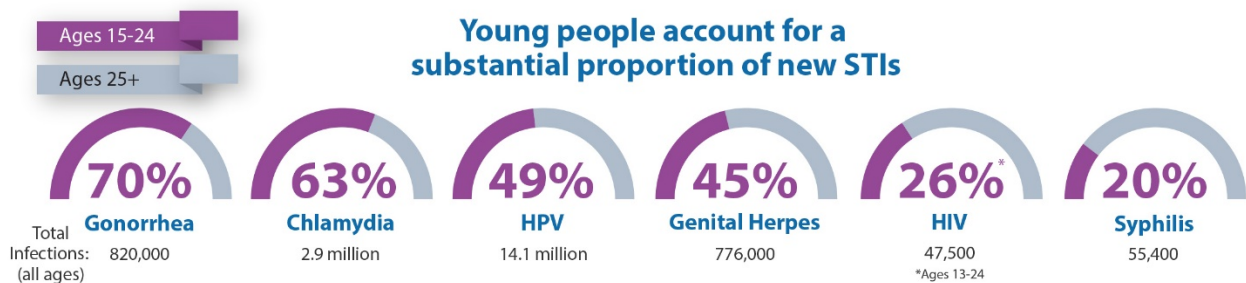
- Urine-based test: Pregnancy, Chlamydia, Gonorrhea, Trichomoniasis
- Blood-based test: HIV, Herpes, Syphilis, Hepatitis

HPV Vaccinations will also be available at no cost.

### 2. Why should adolescents be tested for STIs (sexually transmitted infections)?

Youth age 15-24 are at the highest risk for contracting an STI; they make up **half** of all the new infections diagnosed every year, and they only make up 25% of the population.

The only way to know for sure if you have an STI is to **get tested**. This is because many STIs never show symptoms. Some curable STIs can still be dangerous if left untreated, and other STIs can even be deadly when untreated.



### 3. Is testing free? Who is paying for testing?

Testing is FREE! Community partner agency, Central Illinois Friends, utilizes grant funds to provide free STI testing for the GYT events, as well as free HPV vaccinations for our youth.

The UnityPoint In-School Health Clinics have free and low-cost testing all school-year long. HPV vaccinations are also available from the In-School Health Clinics, but at a cost. These clinics are located at Trewyn School, Manual High, and Peoria High, and are accessible to ALL Peoria Public Schools students all school year.

### 4. Who is doing the testing?

Certified HIV and STI testing specialists from community partner agency Central Illinois Friends will provide the free testing for this event, in partnership with clinical professionals from the UnityPoint In-School Health Clinics.

### 5. Are youth required to get tested?

Youth are not required to get tested. If youth decide to get tested, they can select on their own what tests they want to receive. They can also choose if they want the HPV vaccination or not.

In the state of Illinois, if youth are 12 years or older, they can consent to receive their own sexual health services without parent/guardian consent. This means that youth can consent to their own care when it comes to STI testing and treatment, pregnancy testing, birth control, and HPV vaccinations. Our sexual health education programs promote open and honest conversations with trusted adults when making big decisions related to sexual health, but this law helps to support youth who cannot have safe conversations with adults in their life.

For tips on talking with your youth about sexual and reproductive health, see [this flyer](#)- or contact Hult Center for Healthy Living at 309-692-6650 or email [info@hulthealthy.org](mailto:info@hulthealthy.org)

**6. Do I have to sign something for my youth to get tested?**

You do not have to sign anything/give consent for your youth if they are older than 12. You CAN have a conversation with them before these events! Most young people want to learn about sexual health from the adults in their lives, and talking about getting tested is one way you can help your young person understand how to take care of their health. This also shows them that they can trust you when they need help with something related to sexual health (STIs, pregnancy testing, etc.).

**7. Do I get to know my youth's test results?**

You will only know your youth's test results if they choose to share their results with you, or if your youth gives consent to the provider to share their results with you. Otherwise, their results stay private.

In the state of Illinois, if youth are 12 years or older, they can consent to receive their own confidential sexual health services without parent/guardian consent. This means that youth can consent to their own care when it comes to STI testing and treatment, pregnancy testing, birth control, and HPV vaccinations. Our sexual health education programs promote open and honest conversations with trusted adults when making big decisions related to sexual health, but this law helps to support youth who cannot have safe conversations with adults in their life.

**8. Does the school know my youth's test results?**

They do not. School staff assist to coordinate these events, but they are not informed of any individual's test results. Confidential care is taken extremely seriously during these events.

**9. How will my youth find out if they are positive for something or not?**

We use the rules of "No News is Good News" during the GYT events. This is a common practice in STI testing that means you will NOT be notified if test results are negative for STIs. If test results are positive, a clinician will reach out to that young person specifically

through the phone number they provide on their consent form. Results can be expected between 1-2 weeks after the date of testing.

**10. If my youth tests positive for something, what are the next steps?**

If a person tests positive, they will be notified by a clinician of the test results through the phone number they provide on their consent form. These results will not be sent or shared to parents/caregivers without youth consent.

The clinician who reaches out to inform the young person of the positive result(s) will also walk through next steps for treatment. Not all STIs are treated in the same way, so the treatment process will look different depending on the STI.

The HIV testing and pregnancy testing at these events are rapid tests, which means results are given within minutes of administering the test. If a youth tests positive for pregnancy and/or HIV, the certified testing counselor will immediately walk through treatment options or next steps with that young person, including creating a list of support people and local resources. The testing counselor will also ensure that appropriate mental health support staff (school counselors, social workers, school nurse, or community agencies) referrals are ready and available in the event that the youth is in need of these additional supports.

**11. How can I support my youth if they test positive for something?**

Testing positive for an STI can trigger all kinds of emotions and reactions. There may be embarrassment, shame, guilt, anger, or even fear. Be ready to help that young person process their feelings in a healthy way and reach out for help yourself if you aren't sure how to support your young person – Central Illinois Friends and Hult Center for Healthy Living can help.

Avoid blaming or shaming language, because it may cause a young person to avoid getting tested in the future. They might associate getting tested with these negative feelings and try to avoid future negative feelings by also avoiding the *healthy* choice to get tested.

STI treatment looks different depending on the infection, so show support through assisting to schedule and get to appointments that are needed, help with potential prescriptions that need to be filled and followed, and discuss the importance of talking to partners about getting tested, too.

You may not have the exact answers or know what to say to make them feel better, but remind them that knowing their status is empowering because it means they have options of how to solve the issue. Also remind them that no matter how big the problem feels now, they will not always feel this way. If you are seriously worried about your youth's mental health, don't hesitate to ask for help.

## 12. How can I encourage my youth to get tested?

For many youth, the biggest barrier to getting tested is the negative feelings connected to STIs/sexual health in general, and they may be embarrassed or even ashamed at the idea of having an STI. You can encourage your young person by reminding them that STIs are very common, and knowing your status is important to keeping yourself healthy. It can also be encouraging to know that many STIs are curable or treatable- but the only way to work through the problem is to get tested first! STI testing can feel like a big deal to anyone, but especially to a young person. Show that you are ready to help.

## 13. If my youth doesn't get tested during these events, where else can they get tested?

The UnityPoint In-School Health Clinics are accessible to all students enrolled in Peoria Public Schools, and they provide STI testing, pregnancy testing, and HPV vaccinations all school-year long. Youth can call to schedule an appointment. The clinics are located:

- Manual High: 309-495-8509
- Peoria High: 309-282-1020
- Trewyn School: 309-671-0550

Central Illinois Friends provides free testing services year-round. Anyone can call to schedule an appointment: 309-671-2144

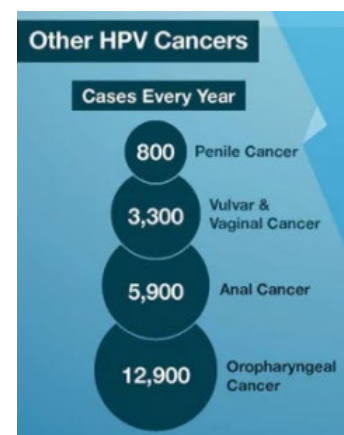
Other local community resources for STI testing:

- Peoria City/County Health Department: 309-679-6000
- Planned Parenthood of Central Illinois: 309-681-0350
- Heartland Health Services: 309-680-7600
- Positive Health Solutions: 309-671-8457

## 14. Why are you providing the HPV vaccination?

Central Illinois Friends has secured grant funding to provide HPV vaccinations for FREE. Human papillomavirus (HPV) is a very common virus that can lead to cancer. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nearly 80 million people—about one in four—are currently infected with HPV in the United States. About 14 million people, including teens, become infected with HPV **each year**.

HPV vaccination is recommended for all preteens (including girls and boys) at age 11–12 years. All preteens need HPV vaccination so they are protected from HPV infections that can cause cancer later in life. Teens and young adults through age 26 who didn't start or finish the HPV vaccine series also need HPV vaccination.



## 15. What are the benefits and side-effects of the HPV vaccination?

Benefits: HPV vaccination works extremely well and has the potential to prevent more than 90% of HPV-related cancers. The HPV vaccine offers long-lasting protection against HPV infection and HPV disease, and does not lose the ability to protect against new HPV infections over time. Many people who get HPV vaccine have no side effects at all.

Side Effects: Vaccines, like any medicine, can have side effects. Some people report having very mild side effects, like a sore arm from the shot. The following is guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention related to side-effects/reactions:

- Pain, redness, or swelling in the arm where the shot was given
- Fever
- Headache or feeling tired
- Nausea
- Muscle or joint pain

Brief fainting spells and related symptoms (such as jerking movements) can happen after any medical procedure, including vaccination. Any youth that receives the vaccination is monitored for negative reactions/symptoms for 15 minutes after receiving the shot.

On very rare occasions, severe allergic reactions may occur after vaccination. People with severe allergies to any component of a vaccine should not receive that vaccine.

Talk with your youth's healthcare provider, or the In-School Health Providers, to discuss any concerns related to allergies or the vaccination in general.

## 16. How are you addressing COVID-prevention during the testing events?

Safety protocols in place include:

- Youth will have their temperature taken upon arrival and answer a screening questionnaire for signs and symptoms with a trained volunteer.
- All personnel assisting with the GYT events will be wearing masks, and all youth with appointments will be asked to wear masks, as well.
- Touchpoints (door handles, surfaces) outside the testing areas will be sanitized regularly.
- Rooms where testing is conducted will be sanitized after each appointment, including seating and surfaces touched.
- Certified testing counselors and In-School Health Providers already wear gloves when conducting testing, but will wear additional personal protective equipment (PPE) that follow COVID-protocols defined by UnityPoint Health.

If you have any questions regarding the safety protocols for preventing COVID-19, please contact Hult Center for Healthy Living at 309-692-6650 or email [info@hulthealthy.org](mailto:info@hulthealthy.org).

**17. Will there be COVID testing at the events?**

No, there will not be any COVID-19 testing at these events. Youth will be screened for COVID-19 with a list of questions and a temperature check. COVID-19 prevention education and prevention kits will be available to youth during the event. Prevention kits include reusable and disposable masks, portable hand sanitizer, and educational materials.

## Additional Resources:

Central Illinois Friends: [www.friendsofcentralillinois.org](http://www.friendsofcentralillinois.org)

Hult Center for Healthy Living: [www.hulthealthy.org](http://www.hulthealthy.org)

In-School Health Clinics: [www.hulthealthy.org/in-school-health/](http://www.hulthealthy.org/in-school-health/)

Talking with Teens: See [this flyer](#)- or contact Hult Center for Healthy Living at 309-692-6650 or email [info@hulthealthy.org](mailto:info@hulthealthy.org)

Talking to Partners about STIs: Share [these](#) healthy communication tools with your youth

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Learn more about STIs, testing, and treatment [www.cdc.gov/std/general/default.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/std/general/default.htm)

Pregnant and Parenting Teens: Children's Home Association of Illinois, Good Beginnings- <https://www.chail.org/Caring-for-Children/Community/Good-Beginnings>

HPV Information for Parents: [More](#) about HPV, the cancers it causes, and the vaccine.

Local Mental Health Resources: Visit [UnityPlace](#), or [OSF Behavioral Health](#)

COVID-19 Testing Locations: Visit the [Peoria/City County Health Department](#) page for testing sites and more information related to COVID-19.

*GYT: Get Yourself Tested Events are a collaborative project between Peoria Public Schools, Hult Center for Healthy Living, Central Illinois Friends, and UnityPoint In-School Health Clinics.*



*Funding for the events and associated resources provided in part by the UnityPoint Health, Heart of Illinois United Way, the Illinois Department of Public Health, Illinois Public Health Association and the City of Peoria Community Development Block Grant.*

