

# Chlamydia Screening

## Implementing an Opt-out Strategy

The latest surveillance data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show that rates of chlamydia infection in 2019 in the U.S. rose for the sixth straight year, reaching an all-time high. While rates of infection are high, screening rates are not high enough. While major public health and medical societies are aligned in their recommendations on screening sexually active young women under 25 annually for chlamydia, we're only screening about half of all women in that age range. Women bear a disproportionate burden of negative health consequences of undiagnosed and untreated chlamydia including pelvic inflammatory disease and infertility.

The STI National Plan from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services outlines an ambitious goal—increase chlamydia screening in sexually active females aged 16–24 years by 13% by 2025 and 30% by 2030. One way to meet that goal is by adopting an opt-out testing strategy, making testing a routine part of care. An important part of an opt-out strategy is using normalizing language when talking to patients. The goal is to focus on the practice rather than the patient. A recent collaborative training initiative in 37 family planning clinics demonstrated the value of opt-out language in practice. In one clinic that increased its screening rate from 20% to 75% "attributed its success to training staff to consistently use opt-out and normalizing language."<sup>\*</sup>

### Examples of normalizing language

“ We recommend a test for chlamydia to everyone under 25.  
Let's test you today while you're here.

“ We test everyone your age  
for chlamydia.

“ We routinely screen all our patients to  
make sure we're not missing a problem.

“ We ask all of our patients your  
age if they've been tested for  
chlamydia recently. That test  
should be done every year.  
Let's do that today.

“ To keep you healthy, I recommend  
testing for chlamydia. It's a common  
infection that usually has no symptoms.  
We test all of our patients.

**[Learn more at chlamydiacoalition.org/opt-out-screening/](https://chlamydiacoalition.org/opt-out-screening/)**

<sup>\*</sup>Quimby, Katherine DeAngelis MPH; Kawatu, Jennifer Ewing RN, MPH; Saul, Katie Martocci MPH; Schamus, Lisa Anne MPH Implementation of a Learning Collaborative Model Increases Chlamydia Screening at 37 Family Planning Clinics: Lessons Learned From 3 Cohorts. Sexually Transmitted Diseases. 2021; 48 (1): 5–11.

