Dear Alice,

I've been going out with a girl here at my school for the past six months. Last weekend I went home (out of state), and fooled around with an ex-girlfriend. She called me last night and told me that she might have an STI. She went to the doctor this week and told me she would let me know when she finds out for sure. We didn't use a condom.

My problem is, what should I tell my girlfriend? I really love her and don't want to ruin things because of this stupid fling I had. But I can tell she's annoyed that I've avoided her all weekend. I can't exactly tell her next time we get together that I don't feel like fooling around, but I don't know how long it will be before I know if I'm infected. And what do I do if I am? Help!

? Desperate

**Answer**

Dear Desperate,

Nobody said relationships were easy, so hang in there. This is a difficult situation and unfortunately, there is no simple solution. First and foremost, it's a good idea to take matters into your own hands and schedule an appointment for a full STI checkup rather than waiting for your ex to get back to you. Although your heart may be hurting, your physical health also needs a checkup.

Since you're concerned, you should make an appointment with your health care provider. At this appointment you may want to explain your recent experience to your health care provider, your reason for concern, and any specific info your ex-girlfriend may have given you (e.g., what STI she may have and what symptom(s) she is experiencing). Once you get tested, no matter what the outcome, you will at least relieve some anxiety just by knowing what you're dealing with.
As for how, when, and whether to tell your present girlfriend about your ex and your STI concerns, it's probably best to be honest in this situation. It may not be easy, but in order to protect her health and to relieve some of the anxiety you're experiencing, an honest conversation is important. Although she may become angry or upset with you, not telling her could lead to bigger issues down the road. Many other readers have had questions about communicating with partners. Check out the Go Ask Alice! Relationships [2] archive for more information and resources.

Before you initiate the conversation you may want to think about how your girlfriend may feel when you tell her so you can prepare for any reaction. She may angry, hurt, jealous, or scared. Or perhaps she will be forgiving and understanding. Consider thinking about your actions before talking with her - why did you want to hook up with your ex? Why didn't you use protection? How will you prevent this from happening in the future? Preparing for these questions should help you talk with your girlfriend openly and honestly.

The past is done and now you can only control your actions from here on out. Take care of your health and consider being honest with your girlfriend. Relationships have survived far worse.

Alice!
Category:
Sexual & Reproductive Health [3]
Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI's) [4]
General [5]

Related questions

What STIs are "testable" and who is infected, anyway? [6]
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Are two condoms better than one? [10]
How do I tell my girlfriend I'm sterile? [11]

Resources

Medical Services (Morningside) [12]
Medical Services (CUMC) [13]
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