

# Opt-Out Screening for Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and HIV

Opt out screening defined: An approach where all patients are informed that STIs/HIV screening will be performed per [CDC](#) and [California Department of Public Health](#) guidelines as part of routine medical care, unless the patient specifically declines.

**Reduces stigma:** removes any requirement for patients to disclose or clinicians to assess potentially stigmatizing sexual health risk factors to determine eligibility for STI/HIV screening.

Patients are **more likely to accept STI/HIV screening** when offered via an opt-out compared with an opt-in approach.<sup>1,2</sup>

**Promotes Equity:** ensures all patients receive STI/HIV screening as indicated, regardless of background.

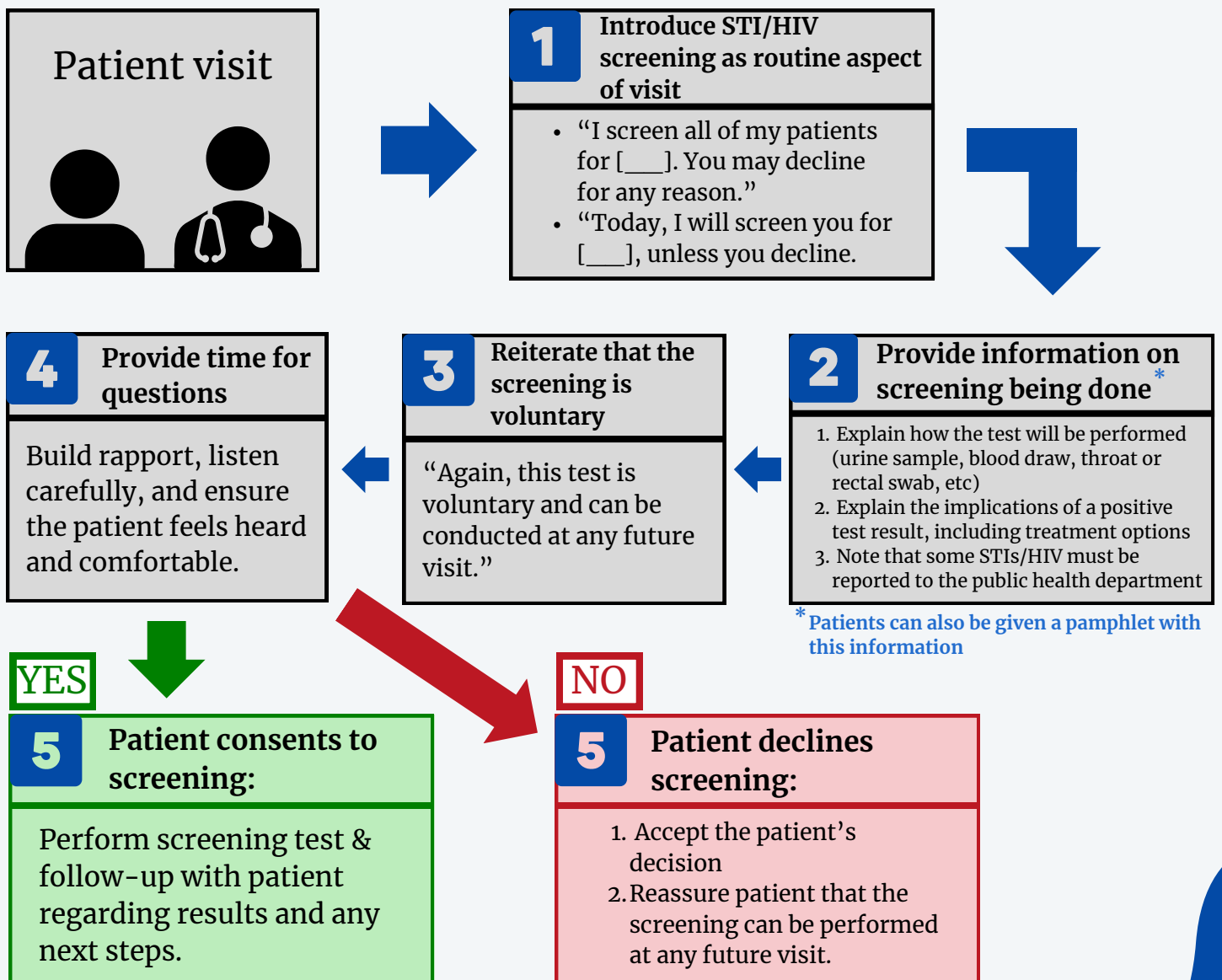
## Why Opt-Out Screening?

Opens the door for more **comprehensive care** for sexual health, including—where appropriate—doxycycline post-exposure prophylaxis (doxy PEP), HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), and HIV PEP.<sup>3</sup>

**Improves detection:** Opt-out approaches increase the number of patients screened for STIs/HIV, facilitating timely diagnosis and treatment.<sup>1,2</sup>

Sources  
<sup>1</sup> Patient choice in opt-in, active choice, and opt-out  
<sup>2</sup> HIV screening: randomized clinical trial  
<sup>3</sup> Evaluation of an emergency department opt-out provider-driven HIV and syphilis screening and linkage-to-care program  
<sup>3</sup> Opt-Out Syphilis Screening at an Urgent Care Center in Atlanta: Evaluation of a Pilot Program

## Opt-Out Screening in Action:



## Best practices:

1. Engage in active listening; ensure all patient questions are answered
2. Avoid using the phrase “high-risk,” as this can be stigmatizing
3. Do not make assumptions about your patients’ sexual practices, including number or gender of sex partners, based on their appearance or personal attributes

## Helpful resources:

- National Coalition for Sexual Health, [New Approach to Sexual History Taking](#)
- Pacific AIDS Education Training Center, [Sexual History Taking and Sex Positivity Educational Webinar](#)
- American Academy of Family Physicians, [Sexual Health History](#)
- CDC, [Clinicians’ Quick Guide on Discussing Sexual Health with Patients](#)
- PubMed Article, [Taking a Sexual History: Best Practices](#)