

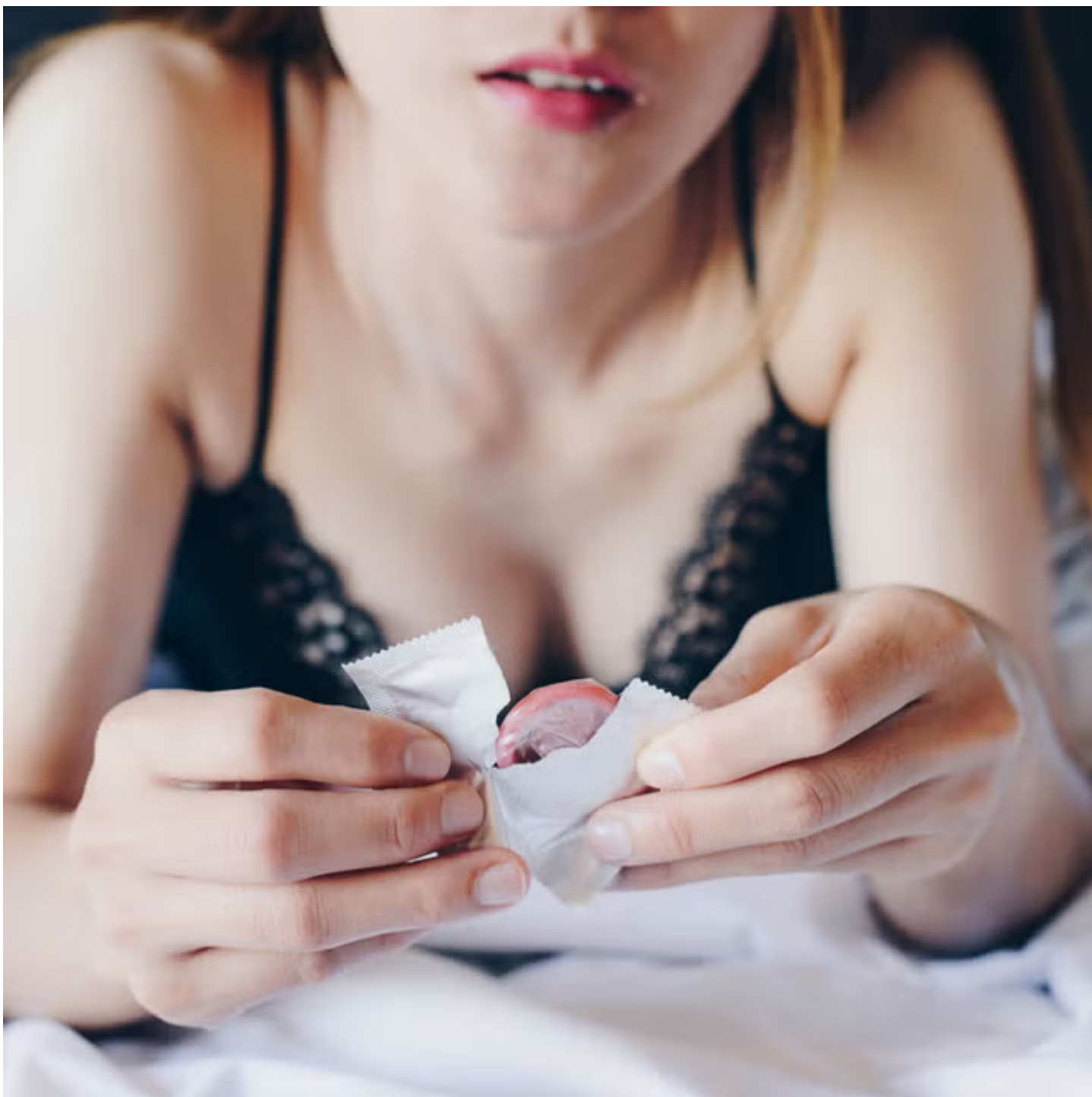
[Sex & Relationships](#) > [Safe Sex](#)

9 Things the Porn Industry Gets Right When It Comes to STIs

Get tested. Know your status.

BY [LYNSEY G](#) PUBLISHED: OCT 19, 2018 9:42 AM EDT

 [SAVE ARTICLE](#)

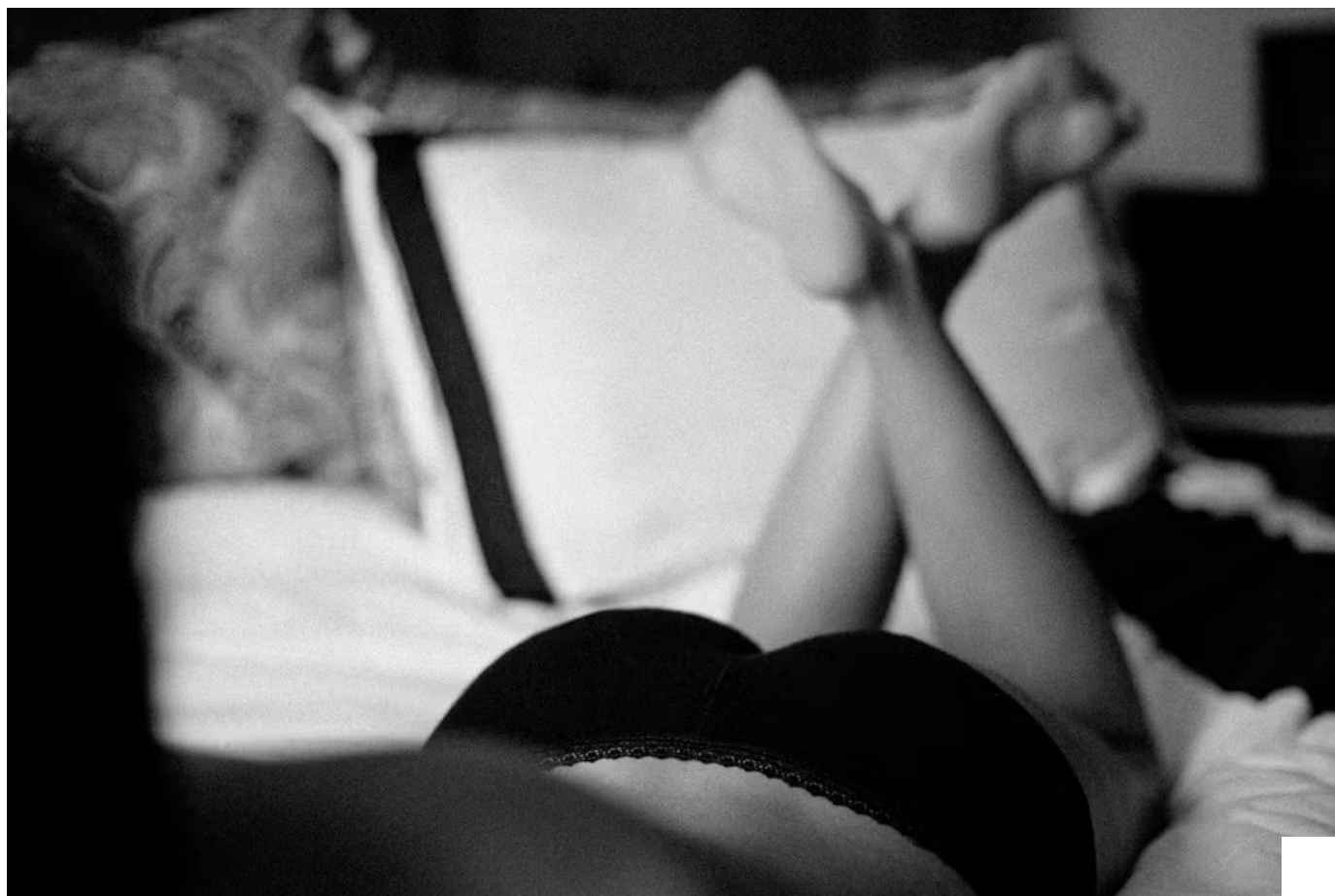


GETTY IMAGES/BOY_ANUPONG

“If you really want to fuck like a porn star,” says adult performer **Michael Vegas**, “then you need to get tested and know your status.”

Adult performers rely on their bodies for their livelihood, so they tend to take very good care of them. That’s why the whole industry take STI transmission *very* seriously. We spoke to adult entertainment insiders about how the professionals maintain their sexual health—and how you can, too.

1. Get tested. Often.



GETTY IMAGES

Porn performers know their STI status at all times, and they're not afraid to talk about it. In the adult entertainment industry, testing is the primary tool used for the prevention of STIs, and porn performers maintain that it's the single most important part of their sexual health toolbox.

[MORE FROM MEN'S HEALTH](#)



Getting tested can be scary for those of us who aren't used to it. [jessica drake](#), a sex educator and adult performer, director, and producer, urges, "Please don't let fear get in the way of getting tested." Her rationale? The more you do it, the less frightening it becomes. And porn stars know—they do it all the time.

The adult industry testing program **FSC-PASS** was developed in 2011 after an earlier testing system became defunct. “PASS was developed so that there would be a secure, online database that would list the availability of performers for work,” says Mike Stabile, a spokesperson for the **Free Speech Coalition**, the national trade association for the adult industry, which facilitates the PASS system.

“If you really want to fuck like a porn star, then you need to get tested and know your status.” - Michael Vegas

“It partners with different clinics across the country to provide rapid STI testing, [and] it allows anyone—a performer, a producer, an agent—to log in and see if the person they are working with or looking to hire has a current ‘clear’ test,” he says. “All performers who work within PASS need to be tested for a full-slate of STIs every 14 days.”

And even among performers who aren't working in PASS, there is a "common courtesy and unwritten law" of a 14-day testing period, according to adult performer **Brett Rossi**. For the most part, every performer in the industry has been tested for trichomoniasis, chlamydia, gonorrhea, hepatitis B or C, syphilis, or HIV within two weeks of going on camera.

And here's the thing: Strict testing *works*. “Because of the PASS system, there has not been an onset transmission of HIV in over a decade,” Vegas says.

2. Don't wait to get tested.



GETTY IMAGES

“Get tested! Even if you trust your partner or don't think you have anything, get tested,” says **Riley Reyes**, an adult performer, activist, and Vice President of the **Adult Performer Advocacy Committee** (APAC).

A lot of STIs **don't show any symptoms**, or lie dormant for long periods of time between tests. “Most STIs are spread unwittingly by a person who doesn't realize they have anything,” Reyes adds.

If you wait until you show symptoms of an STI, you've already waited too long. “The longer you go without being tested and the more partners you have, the chances of you walking around with an STI, not knowing and spreading it are much higher,” Rossi says. “Be smart, get tested.”

“In the general public people test very infrequently—often only after they detect symptoms—which means that infections have a much better chance of spreading,” Stabile says.

Because they know all of this, some porn performers test even more frequently than the PASS system requires. “I get tested probably every 10 days,” Rossi says. “I also try to get tested earlier than the 14-day expectation to avoid any mishaps and get treated sooner if I should be exposed to an STI.”

3. Be aware that not all STI tests are created equal.



GETTY IMAGES

The medical industry is always trying to make testing better, so it's important to keep up with the pace of progress. In the porn industry, where testing is hugely important, performers are tested for HIV using the PCR RNA Aptima method.

“Today, we can identify a possible HIV infection 7 to 10 days after exposure—meaning the testing system can identify a possible risk before that person has enough copies of the virus to transmit it to anyone else,” Stabile says.

Those tests can be expensive, and not all doctors are able to use them. “The test most people get at the doctor’s office or at a free clinic won’t be able to detect HIV until 28 days after exposure at the earliest—and often as long as 90 days after exposure,” Stabile says.

Before you decide where to get tested, determine what kind of test you want, find out how much of it your insurance can cover, and choose your provider accordingly.

4. Be open to different types of protection.





GETTY IMAGES

In the adult entertainment industry, every method of preventing STI transmission is on the table. “We don’t believe that condoms and testing are mutually exclusive,” says Mike Stabile. “They’re both tools in a toolbox of prevention options, along with medical protocols like PrEP, vaccinations, etcetera.”

Start with barrier protection. Every sexually active person should be carrying around condoms, gloves, dental dams, and so on. “Learn to use condoms,” Vegas recommends. “Carry them in your stuff so you’ll have one when you need it but least expect it. It can help sex feel more spontaneous that way!”

Everyone’s needs are different, so it’s important to be honest with yourself about your sexual wellness needs. Condoms and other forms of barrier protection are great, but they’re only one form of protection among many.

“[Condoms] are much less effective on adult sets than civilians might think,” Stabile says. “Under hot lights and vigorous activity and larger-than-average penises, condoms routinely break, tear, and fall off. When you’re shooting for several hours, they can cause friction rashes called ‘condom burn.’ Paradoxically, if a condom fails, those rashes and burns can leave a performer more vulnerable to STI transmission.”

We're not saying *you're* having sex under the same conditions, of course. But whatever they might be, it's important to know your own needs and be ready to meet them.

“Condoms can be a great prevention option, but they're often the *only* option presented in public health messaging,” Stabile says. Instead of relying on condoms alone, he recommends testings and other methods like PrEP, in conjunction with barrier protection.

5. Learn about PrEP.



GETTY IMAGES

Medications like Pre-exposure prophylaxis, or PrEP, can help prevent uninfected people from contracting HIV, and it's a great tool for those who are sexually active. "Performers in the adult industry have really been leading the charge in the discussion of PrEP, but we don't have any stats as to just how many performers are taking the medication. We recommend it on a regular basis," Stabile says.

But for all its benefits, "I know very few performers taking PrEP, which is unfortunate," Vegas said. "It is a game-changer, but the medication is expensive, and nobody in the industry is helping the performers get the meds."

drake, a PrEP user herself, points out that the medication can't be used to prevent STI transmission across the board. "Folks in the general population who are on it have lower rates of STIs, in part due to more frequent testing," she says.

Once patients start taking PrEP, the **CDC recommends** that they get STI tests at least every 6 months thereafter, and many doctors require their patients to be tested even more frequently. That means that people on PrEP are more likely to know their STI status. "For me, being on PrEP has given me peace of mind and another layer of safety," drake says.

For more information on PrEP, and to determine if it's right for you, **visit the**

CDC's website.

6. Get your shots.



GETTY IMAGES

HPV is an incredibly common STI—the CDC estimates that one in four Americans have it. It can be present and passed on without showing symptoms. Moreover, it comes in over 150 varieties, many of which never show symptoms. That makes it

difficult to detect for both patients and doctors. And, because it can be passed from mucous-membrane and skin-to-skin contact, barrier protection can't always stop it. That's why, Reyes says, "I do recommend that every sexually active person, adult industry or not, get their HPV vaccinations."

Gardasil 9, often called the HPV vaccine, protects against the transmission of the types of HPV that cause genital warts and cancers of the cervix, vagina, vulva, anus, throat, and penis. And it was **recently approved** for use in adults from ages 27-45. For more information, and to determine if Gardasil is right for you, consult with your doctor.

7. Be honest with your partners. *All* of them.





GETTY IMAGES

Once you've gotten comfortable with your own STI-prevention tools and gotten yourself tested, you've got to be honest with your partner or partners. And that means your current partners, your prospective partners, and your past partners.

That can be scary, but the adult entertainment industry provides a great example of how to make it work. In porn, when someone tests positive for an STI, they're removed from the talent pool immediately until their STI clears up. And that's not all—the infected person's partners and their partners' partners are also notified, and immediately tested.

When an STI is caught, it can trigger a shutdown of the entire industry, until everyone involved is tested and the infection has been isolated from the rest of the talent pool.

“Any STI can trigger a production hold or additional testing. We're most likely to call production holds when a viral infection like HIV is detected. HIV, while treatable, remains incurable,” Stabile says. “In the past, however, we've called production holds for syphilis and issued alerts and warnings for non-traditional

infections like ringworm.”

The point is, finding out you have an STI is no time to get worried about talking honestly with someone you’re currently, hopefully, or formerly intimate with. “In times like these we *have* to be united as an industry and support one another,” drake says.

8. Realize that not all of your partners might be honest with *you*.



GETTY IMAGES

“While comedians and politicians talk about porn performers and other sex workers as a health threat, performers are much more worried about contact with the untested general population,” Stabile says. “Many performers will only date or have sex with other performers in PASS, or require that their own partners be tested.”

It gives me major anxiety to think about having unprotected sex with the general population. - Michael Vegas

“Outside of the industry I always use barrier protection, out of respect for my colleagues and my own health,” Reyes says.

Before Rossi married a director and became monogamous to her spouse outside of work, she would always use condoms—regardless of whether her partner said they had a recent test. “If I had sex with a non-industry individual, I never relied on [their] tests, because those that are not in the industry do not test as frequently as industry folks do,” she says.

“So many ‘civilians’ have no clue about their sexual health, what signs and symptoms of STI's are, and how to treat them,” Vegas said. “The majority of civilians have never even been tested. It gives me major anxiety to think about having unprotected sex with the general population.”

9. Talk about it.



GETTY IMAGES

Follow the porn industry's example, Stabile urges: “If you want to have sex like a porn star, then demand the same from your partners.” Make sure their tests are up to date. Ask to see paperwork. Use barrier protection, and most importantly, *talk* about STIs

“I think that civilians could learn a lot from the way we deal with common STIs,” says Riley Reyes. “Since we always know our status, it's easy to get proper care quickly, without drama and stigma.”

Stigma is what makes the idea of talking about sexual health so daunting for most of us. But, says Mike Stabile, “Performers have learned to talk frankly about sex, and often make a recent test a prerequisite for sexual contact.”

And the rest of us could benefit from doing the same. “Civilians need to learn that asking someone about their testing history isn’t an accusation, nor is it an invitation to slut-shame,” Stabile adds. “Pretending STIs don’t exist, or crossing your fingers and hoping to stay lucky, isn’t prevention. Frank conversation is.”

Make it a habit to talk honestly and openly about your sexual health. The more you communicate about it, the easier it gets.

A great first step is using appropriate language. “Let’s help lessen the stigma surrounding HIV and STIs by not saying someone tested ‘clean’ or ‘dirty,’” drake recommends.

Reyes agrees. “I don’t like the word ‘clean’ to refer to STI status. It implies that contracting an infection is ‘dirty,’ when it’s really just the result of exposure to pathogens. STIs can happen to anyone who is sexually active.” And that’s nothing to be ashamed about.

Maximize Your Fitness with Men’s Health



Find a Fitness Plan

Whether aiming for strength, big arms, or visible abs, Men’s Health offers a training plan for every goal.

[READ MORE](#)



Clean Up Your Diet

Your fitness HQ isn’t the gym—it’s the kitchen. Master everything from pre-workout snacks to muscle-building nutrition.

[READ MORE](#)



Build Muscle at Any Age

Build huge quads in your 30s, get lean in your 40s, or achieve peak fitness after 50. Men's Health is here to guide you.

[READ MORE](#)

Maximize and maintain your fitness with a Men's Health subscription. Enjoy expert training plans, 450+ workouts, unlimited access to MensHealth.com, print magazines and more.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Daily

Want six-pack abs? Start here.

Fat-burning workouts and expert weight loss advice, delivered daily.

Enter your email address here.

LET'S DO THIS.

By signing up, I agree to the [Terms of Use](#) (including the [dispute resolution procedures](#)) and have reviewed the [Privacy Notice](#).

This site is protected by reCAPTCHA and the Google [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Service](#) apply.

