

Expedited Partner Therapy (EPT) Frequently Asked Questions for Health Care Professionals



What is Expedited Partner Therapy (EPT)?

Expedited Partner Therapy (EPT) is a strategy to treat the sex partners of people diagnosed with sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and prevent the further spread of STDs. N.J.S.A. 26:4-48.2, et seq. (the EPT statute), authorizes a health care professional (a physician, advanced practice nurse, certified nurse midwife, and/or a physician assistant) to give patients, whom the professional diagnoses as having one or more STDs, medication or prescriptions to give to their sex partners to treat the STD without conducting a medical evaluation or clinical assessment of the patient's sex partners.

Why is EPT important?

EPT has been a common practice in numerous states for over ten years. Studies have found that EPT decreases rates of chlamydia and gonorrhea reinfection among patients and increases the rate of treatment of patients' sex partners, which decreases the further spread of infection. See <https://www.cdc.gov/std/ept/default.htm> for links to EPT studies and findings, and for additional information about EPT.

Who is eligible for EPT?

The EPT statute at N.J.S.A. 26:4-48.2 states that a health care professional may provide EPT to any sexual partner of a patient whom the professional diagnoses as having an STD provided that the patient indicates, with reasonable certainty, that:

- (1) The patient has had sexual contact with the sexual partner within the past 60 days under circumstances in which there was a risk of transmission of an STD;
- (2) The sexual partner is unable or unwilling to seek clinical services in a timely manner; and
- (3) The patient will be able to contact the sex partner for the purposes of providing EPT.

What is the STD treatment that health care professionals must provide by means of EPT?

The EPT statute at N.J.S.A. 26:4-48.3, and the implementing rules at N.J.A.C. 8:67-2.1, state that

health care professionals providing EPT must adhere to the CDC's STD Treatment Guidelines, which provide guidance for administering EPT. This publication, including updates and other EPT resources, is available at <https://www.cdc.gov/std/treatment/default.htm>.

What if a sex partner has questions about EPT?

The EPT statute at N.J.S.A. 26:4-48.3 states that a sex partner receiving EPT should be instructed to contact a health care professional, the local board of health, or the STD Program of the New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) with EPT questions or concerns.

In whose name should a health care professional write an EPT prescription?

The EPT statute at N.J.S.A. 26:4-48.2 states that a health care professional should write EPT prescriptions in the names of the patients' sex partners if known, and, if unknown, in the name of "Expedited Partner Therapy."

What information must health care professionals share with their patients when providing EPT so that patients know how to give EPT prescriptions or medication to their sex partners?

The EPT statute at N.J.S.A. 26:4-48.2 requires a health care professional prescribing EPT to:

- (1) Give the patient, whom the professional has diagnosed as having an STD, certain NJDOH educational materials on EPT;
- (2) Instruct the patient to give the NJDOH EPT educational material and the EPT prescriptions or medication to the patient's sex partners; and
- (3) Request that the patient advise the sex partners of the importance of seeking clinical evaluation for the STD from a health care professional.

How can health care professionals obtain the NJDOH EPT educational materials?

The NJDOH makes the EPT educational material available to health care professionals by:

Continued on side 2

- (1) Posting them to the NJDOH website at <https://www.nj.gov/health/hivstdtb/stds/>, from which they can be downloaded and printed;
- (2) Sending copies thereof to health care professionals, upon telephone request to the STD Program at (609) 826-4869; and
- (3) Distributing them at continuing health care professional education events throughout the State.

Can health care professionals incur liability if they prescribe EPT?

The EPT statute at N.J.S.A. 26:4-48.4 states that a health care professional who provides EPT pursuant to the EPT statute shall not be subject to civil or criminal liability or professional disciplinary action in connection with any act or omission taken in good faith, except in the case of gross negligence or willful misconduct.

Will health care professionals incur liability if they choose not to provide EPT?

The EPT statute at N.J.S.A. 26:4-48.4 states that a health care professional shall not be subject to civil or criminal liability or professional disciplinary action for choosing not to provide EPT.

Can a pharmacist fill a prescription written in the name of “Expedited Partner Therapy”?

The EPT statute at N.J.S.A. 26:4-48.4 states that a licensed pharmacist who dispenses a prescription for EPT medication that was issued pursuant to the EPT statute shall not be subject to civil or criminal liability or professional disciplinary action in connection with any act or omission taken in good faith, except in the case of gross negligence or willful misconduct. The EPT statute authorizes health care professionals to write prescriptions in the name of “Expedited Partner Therapy”; therefore, a pharmacist can fill such a prescription, even if a sex partner’s name, address, and date of birth are not listed on the prescription.

Who will pay for a sex partner’s EPT medication?

The EPT statute at N.J.S.A. 26:4-48.2 states that health care professionals may prescribe or dispense

medication for the treatment of the sexual partner’s STD. If a health care professional writes an EPT prescription, the patient’s sex partners or their health benefits plan would incur the cost of the filled prescription. The EPT statute at N.J.S.A. 26:4-48.4 states that a patient’s health benefits plan is not required to pay for or reimburse the cost of EPT for the patient’s sex partner unless the sex partner is listed as a beneficiary under the patient’s health benefit plan.

Where can my patients find free or low-cost medical care and medication in New Jersey?

Patients and their sex partners can obtain information about Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) and STD clinics from which one can obtain free or low cost health care and medication from the NJDOH STD Program website at <https://www.nj.gov/health/hivstdtb/stds/locations.shtml>; and by contacting their local health department. A directory of local health departments is available here: <https://www.state.nj.us/health/lh/documents/LocalHealthDirectory.pdf>.

Where can my patients find out how to get health insurance in New Jersey?

Information about health insurance plans and financial assistance can be obtained through Get Covered NJ, New Jersey’s official health insurance marketplace, at <https://nj.gov/getcoverednj/>, or by telephoning the Get Covered NJ customer call center at (833) 677-1010.

Where can I find more information about EPT in New Jersey?

Information about EPT, including materials that can be downloaded and printed, is available at <https://www.nj.gov/health/hivstdtb/stds/> and at <https://www.cdc.gov/std/treatment/default.htm>