Key Points
Ensure a Positive Sexual Health Conversation

- Assess your own comfort discussing sex with various patient groups and identify any biases that you may have. If you are uncomfortable talking about sex and sexuality, your patient will be too.

- Make your patient feel comfortable and establish rapport before asking sensitive questions.

- Use neutral and inclusive terms (e.g., "partner") and pose your questions in a non-judgmental manner.

- Avoid making assumptions about your patient based on age, appearance, marital status, or any other factor. Unless you ask, you cannot know a person's sexual orientation, behaviors, or gender identity.

- Try not to react overtly, even if you feel uncomfortable or embarrassed. Pay attention to your body language and posture.

- Ask patients for their pronouns. Use the pronouns they prefer, and support that patient's gender identity, even if their anatomy does not match that identity. Introduce yourself first with your name and pronoun to set the tone for a safe environment.

- Rephrase your question or briefly explain why you are asking a question if a patient seems offended or reluctant to answer.

- Use ubiquity statements to strive to neutralize the conversation. For example, "It is important to know that sexual concerns are common among individuals. Many people experience similar concerns and it is completely normal."

- Ensure that you and your patient share an understanding of the terms being used to avoid confusion. If you are not familiar with a term your patient used, ask for an explanation.

Non-Gendered Language
Acknowledge Differences in Identity, Language Use, and Sexual Practices

USE THIS...	...INSTEAD OF THIS
Genitals	Vulva, vagina, penis, testicles
External area, external pelvic area, outside	Vulva
Genital opening, front pelvic opening	Vaginal opening
Frontal canal, Internal canal, inside	Vagina
Internal organs, organs you retain	Uterus, ovaries, cervix
Chest	Breasts
Bleeding	Period, menstruation

The 8 P's: Sample Questions

Preferences

Do you have a preferred language that you use to refer to your body?

What kinds of sex do you engage in?

Partners

Have you had sex in the last 3 months? If so, what kind(s) of sex have you engaged in?

How would your partners identify themselves in terms of gender?

Practices

Do you have any other types of sex that hasn't been asked about?

Do you use toys inside your [insert preferred language for genitals] or anus, or on your partner(s)?

Pleasure

Do you have any pain or discomfort during or after an orgasm?

Are you having sex for pleasure or are there other reasons (survival sex/transactional sex)?

Past History of STIs

Have you ever had a sexually transmitted infection in the past?

If yes, do you remember the part of the body that tested positive?

Protections From STIs

Are there some kinds of sex where you do not use barriers?

Partner Abuse

Has anyone ever forced or compelled you to do anything sexually that you did not want to do?

Is there any violence in any of your relationships?

Pregnancy Plans

Have you thought about having your own biological children, or carrying a pregnancy?

When you are having sex, is there any exposure to sperm or chance of pregnancy?

Questions to Avoid

And Suggested Alternatives When Taking A Sexual History

AVOID ASKING:	HOW COME?	INSTEAD ASK:
Are you sexually active?	No timeframe, vague	Have you had sex in the last 3 months? If so, what kind(s) of sex have you engaged in?
Do you have a girlfriend, husband, etc.?	Assumes heterosexuality	What is the gender identity of your partner(s)?
Do you have sex with men, women, or both?	What about trans and/or non-binary people?	Do you share the same gender identity as your sexual partners(s)?
Do you use condoms?	Protection is more than condoms - PrEP, OCPs, etc	What methods of protection do you prefer when having sex?
Have you had insertive or receptive anal intercourse?	Patients may not understand these terms	The last time you had sex, were you the Top, Bottom, or both?