

Sexually transmissible infections (STIs) and STI testing



Summary

- Information about sexually transmissible infections (STIs) and sexual health is important for everyone to be safe, healthy and respectful.
- It is important to get an STI test every 3-12 months.
- Having safe sex can keep you healthy and well.

What is a sexually transmissible infection (STI)?

Sexually transmissible infections (STIs) are infections that can make you sick. People can get STIs during unsafe sexual activity with someone who has an STI. Unsafe sex is sex without using a condom. Sexual activity includes:

- penis in vagina (vaginal sex)
- penis in bottom/anus (anal sex)
- licking, sucking, kissing partner's genitals (oral sex)
- sharing sex toys
- skin to skin contact of the genitals.

Without proper treatment, STIs can make you very sick and can make it hard to have a baby in the future.

Some STIs you may have heard about are chlamydia, syphilis, gonorrhoea and herpes.

Can anyone get an STI?

Yes. Anyone who has sexual activity can get an STI.

How do I know if I have an STI?

Most STIs have no signs or symptoms. The only way to know if you have an STI is to get an STI test. If you have a partner, it is important that they get tested too.

Signs or symptoms of STIs can be:

- unusual discharge or bleeding from the vagina, penis or bottom (anus)
- pain when weeing (urinating)
- unusual lumps or skin growths around the vagina, penis or bottom (anus)
- a rash around the vagina, penis or bottom (anus)
- an itchy vagina, penis or bottom (anus)
- blisters and sores around your vagina, penis or bottom (anus)
- warts around your vagina, penis or bottom (anus)

If you notice any of these signs – get tested as soon as possible and stop having sex until you have seen a doctor.



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How can I protect myself from STIs?

- Use condoms during sexual activity.
- Get tested every 3-12 months.
- Don't share injecting or tattooing equipment with anyone. Use safe and clean equipment.

What is an STI test?

STI tests are confidential medical checks that can tell you if you have any STIs. A doctor will ask questions about your sexual history to find out the tests you need. It is important to answer these questions honestly even if you feel nervous. These conversations are private.

STIs are tested for by a urine sample or a self-collected swab and a blood test. Your doctor cannot share the results of your test with anyone without your permission.

When should I get an STI test?

Anyone who is sexually active should get an STI test every 3-12 months or:

- if you think you might have an STI
- if you had sexual activity without a condom
- if the condom broke or fell off during sexual activity
- when you have a new partner
- if you notice any unusual symptoms

STIs are common and there is no shame in getting tested.

Where can I get an STI test?

- Local doctor – this may cost money
- Sexual health clinic – this is free.
- Call the NSW Sexual Health Infolink on 1800 451 624 to find a location near you.

Can you treat STIs?

Yes. All STIs can be treated and managed to keep you healthy and well.

Your doctor will let you know what treatment you need if you have an STI.

Do not have sex until your treatment is finished.

What do I do if the doctor tells me I have an STI?

If the doctor tells you that you have an STI (tested positive), it is important that you get treatment to stay healthy and well.

If you need to take medicine, take it the way your doctor says, even if you start to feel better.

You should also tell your sexual partners so they can get tested and treated too. This is a sign of respect.



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Where can I get help or more information?

To find out more information about STIs and STI testing in New South Wales, these services can help:

Service	What does it do?	Contact information
healthdirect	A free phone service where you can get health information and advice on any topic.	1800 022 222 Open 24 hours http://www.healthdirect.gov.au/
NSW Sexual Health Infolink	A free phone line where you can talk to a nurse about HIV and HIV testing.	1800 451 624 9am–5.30pm Monday to Friday https://www.shil.nsw.gov.au/palm-scheme
NSW Sexual Health Clinics	Free sexual health clinics for people in NSW.	Call the NSW Sexual Health Infolink (1800 451 624) to find your closest clinic. https://www.shil.nsw.gov.au/palm-scheme
Talkline	A free phone where you can talk to a nurse about sexual and reproductive health.	1300 658 886 8.30am–5.00pm Monday to Friday https://www.fpnsw.org.au/talkline
Country Liaison Officer (CLO)	CLOs are people appointed by Pacific and Timor-Leste governments to support workers in Australia. They can provide you with local support.	You can find all current CLO contact details on the PALM website https://www.palmscheme.gov.au/contact
PALM scheme support line	If your employer cannot answer your questions, you can call the PALM scheme support service line.	1800 51 51 31 PALM@dewr.gov.au The support service line and email inbox are monitored 8:30 am–6:30 pm AEST -calls after hours should be for critical incidents only
Multicultural HIV & Hepatitis Service	The Multicultural HIV and Hepatitis Service (MHAHS) works with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities in NSW to improve health and well-being in relation to HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C.	1800 108 098 https://www.mhahs.org.au/index.php/en/
NSW Council for Pacific Communities/Community Connections	The NSW Council for Pacific Communities runs the Community Connections Program. Community Connections helps PALM workers adapt to life in NSW and feel connected to NSW communities.	0451 021 919 CommunityConnections@SalvationArmy.org.au https://www.nswcpc.org.au/

If you would like an interpreter to help you access health services or information, please contact the Translating and Interpreting Service on 131 450.

