

TESTING FOR STIs

10 reasons to test for STIs - Looking after your playground!



"Being sexually active means that testing for STIs is an important part of maintaining your health and the health of your partner(s)"

10 REASONS TO TEST FOR STIs

1. To look after your health and your sexual partners.
2. STI symptoms are not always obvious and often people have no symptoms.
3. When you start a relationship with someone new.
4. When you end a relationship where other sexual partners are involved.
5. Ending a relationship might also mean you have an increased chance of catching an STI.
6. When you have sex without a condom with a casual partner.
7. When you have lots of sex partners.
8. Anyone who is sexually active is at risk of getting an STI.
9. If you have HIV, STIs can be more serious if they are not treated.
10. Most STIs are curable.

TIPS

- Talk with your sexual partners.
- Understand how STIs are transmitted.
- Know how to use condoms properly.
- Check with your doctor or nurse about testing.
- Get tested routinely as part of your standard checks.
- Get STIs treated early when you are diagnosed with one.



"Getting an STI check-up every three to six months is a good guideline."

ASKING FOR A STI-CHECK

These days, STI testing is really simple and can be done at your GP or sexual health clinic. Usually STI testing is free of charge if you go to a bulk billing GP or a sexual health clinic. A Medicare card is not required and you do not have to use your real name. Like all medical information, your STI check is confidential.

When you find a doctor or a clinic where you feel safe and comfortable to talk about your sexual health, your doctor or nurse will be able to order the appropriate tests. If something does turn up, you'll get the right information, treatment and support.

WHAT TESTS ARE THERE?

There are many different tests for STIs and it depends on the type of sex you're having. Most STI tests are very simple to do with a urine sample or swab of the throat, anus and vagina. The last two swabs you can do yourself, pretty easy and it is less confronting than it used to be.

Some STI tests require a blood test - your doctor or nurse can do this for you. It is important for both men and women who have anal sex or anal play (using dildos, fingers or fisting) to have a swab of their anus done too.

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WHAT WILL THEY ASK?

Here are some questions you will most likely be asked at your STI check-up:

- Are you currently in a relationship?
- In the last three months, how many sexual partners have you had?
- How many partners have you had in the past 12 months?
- Were these casual or regular partners?
- Were your sexual partners male, female or both?
- When was the last time you had vaginal sex/oral sex/anal sex without a condom?
- In the past year were you ever paid for sex?
- Have you previously been diagnosed with an STI?
- Is there anything else that is concerning you?

STIs, PrEP & VIRAL LOAD

Some people may decide not to use condoms when taking HIV Pre Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP). PrEP means taking HIV medicine before the risk of exposure with unprotected sex. When used as prescribed, PrEP reduces the risk of HIV infection however, it does not prevent the passing on of an STI. Some people living with HIV also decide not to use condoms when taking HIV medications and the HIV viral load has been undetectable for at least six months. It's important to know that an undetectable HIV viral load (UVL) does not prevent STIs. In all of these situations if you want to avoid STIs, talk with your sexual partner and consider the need for testing before engaging in sex without a condom.

STIs AND VACCINATIONS

Not all STIs can be vaccinated against. This is best discussed with your doctor or at the sexual health clinic. The vaccinations that you should talk about are for Hepatitis A&B and Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) - the virus that may cause vaginal and anal warts.

SEX, ALCOHOL AND DRUGS

A lot of people have sex after drinking alcohol or when using drugs. For some people this makes sex more pleasurable though for others, it can increase the risks of STIs.

In this situation it's important to plan and stay in control while you're under the influence. It will help to keep sex pleasurable and safe. This usually means having sex with a condom or having sex that reduces the risk of STIs (like mutual masturbation or fingering) or waiting to have sex when you're sober.

MORE INFORMATION

www.positivelife.org.au
free call 1800 245 677



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