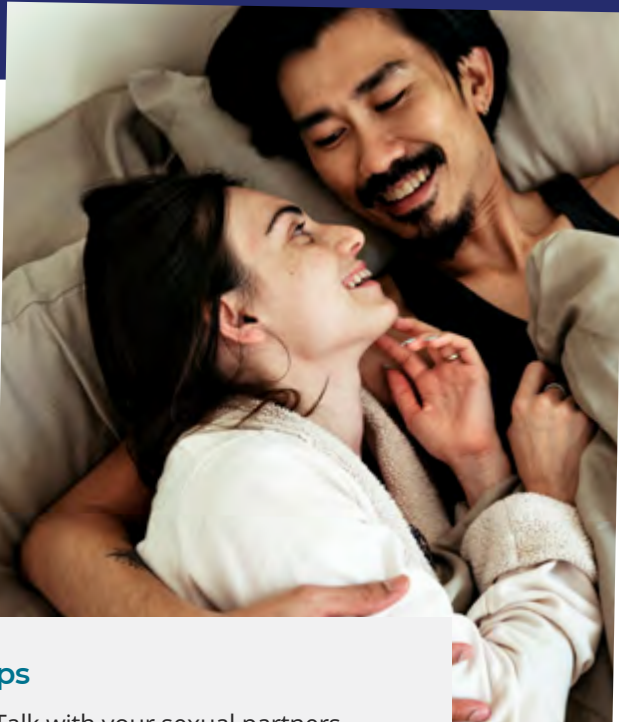


HIV & Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)

10 reasons to test – looking after your playground!



What are STIs?

STIs are infections which are spread from person to person through sexual activities including anal, vaginal or oral sex.

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. Each time you start a relationship with someone new.
4. When you end a relationship with other sexual partners.
5. Ending a relationship might also mean you have an increased chance of getting an STI.
6. When you have sex without a condom or there was some risk of exposure to an STI.
7. When you have multiple sex partners.
8. Anyone who is sexually active is at risk of getting an STI.
9. If you are living with HIV, STIs can be more serious if they are not treated.
10. Most STIs are easily treated and curable however, some may require continuous monitoring and treatment.

Asking for a STI check

- You can get an STI test at your GP or any sexual health clinic.
- STI tests are free from any GP who bulk bills or at any sexual health clinic.
- You don't need to have a Medicare card to get tested at a sexual health clinic and you don't have to use your real name.
- Like all your medical information, an STI check is confidential.
- If you are HIV negative when you get an STI test, ask for a HIV test as well to be on the safe side. If something does turn up, you'll get the right information, treatment and support.

Tips

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



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

STIs, PrEP and viral load

Some people decide not to use condoms when taking Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP). When used as prescribed, PrEP is medication that prevents you from contracting HIV. However, it does not prevent you from contracting other STIs.

Some people living with HIV also decide not to use condoms when taking HIV medications and their 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 having 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 papillomavirus (HPV). HPV is a virus that may cause vaginal and anal warts, as well as some cancers.

Sex, alcohol and drugs

Drugs and alcohol may affect your ability to make decisions. It's important to plan and stay in control. This can mean 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.

If you are very drunk or high you can't give informed consent to have sex with someone else. If another person is in anyway drunk or high and/or doesn't know what's going on, they are unable to give informed consent. Without consent, any form of sexual activity is against the law.

Where can I get an STI check?

In NSW you can get tested for an STI or have a sexual health check-up in a number of different places. You can choose to ask for a test at your own doctor. STI testing is free and confidential at these places: a [sexual health clinic](#), [family planning clinic](#), [youth health centre](#), [women's health centre](#) or [Aboriginal community controlled health services](#).

What will they ask?

- 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?

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 usually just a urine sample or swab of the throat, anus and/or vagina. The last two swabs you can do yourself, 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.

For more information phone 02 8357 8386 or 1800 245 677 (freecall) or visit www.positivelife.org.au

Updated August 2022

The voice of all people living with HIV

Positive Life NSW