



# **Beforeplay – It's the test part *before* the best part.**

## **Travelling & Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) – the stuff you should know**

Sexually transmissible infections (STIs) are common – in fact 1 in 6 people will get an STI in their lifetime. Yep, they're that common – but the good news is they don't have to be!

By making regular STI testing and safe sex part of your *Beforeplay*, you can help protect yourself and your partner(s) from STIs.

### **Am I at risk of STIs?**

Anyone who is sexually active can get an STI, but they are most common in young people aged 34 and under.

STIs occur when viruses, bacteria or parasites are passed on through unprotected vaginal, oral and anal sex, and skin-to-skin contact.

If you're travelling for work, study, adventure or fun, sexual health awareness should be an important part of your pre-trip planning.

### **Sexual health check-ups**

If you're having sex, you should get a regular sexual health check-up, even if you use protection every time and feel healthy. You should encourage your sexual partner(s) to do the same.

- Consider more frequent STI check-ups if you're having sex when you travel.
- Being away from home sometimes means people may be less prepared and take greater risks, such as engaging in unprotected sex. Your healthcare professional can give you advice about how often to get tested.

- If you are going away for a long period of time, ensure you have an adequate supply of your medication. Chat to your healthcare professional to arrange enough medication to cover the duration of your journey, such as Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP).

### **Always be prepared for safe sex – use protection**

Whether you're travelling for recreation or work, it's easy to get swept up in the moment and take risks. But you can prevent STIs by always using protection and getting tested regularly.

- Use condoms or dental dams during oral sex to help prevent the spread of STIs.
- Using condom-safe lubricants (e.g. water or silicone based) can help stop condoms from breaking.
- Use a new condom every time you switch between oral, anal or vaginal sex or between partners.
- Always pack an adequate supply of condoms and dental dams. The availability and quality of condoms may vary at your destination.
- Before any sexual activity, it's important you have your partner's consent, and that you give yours too. It's ok to say no if you are not in the mood or don't feel comfortable.

- Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) is a medication that can sometimes prevent HIV from infecting a person who has been exposed. It involves taking medication for 4 weeks after exposure and is best started within 72 hours (3 days) of exposure. Some healthcare professionals can provide PEP. Otherwise, PEP is available from the emergency department of most public hospitals and sexual health clinics.
- Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is highly effective in preventing HIV infection - talk to your doctor about whether it could be right for you. You can find more resources about PrEP at [prepguidelines.com.au/patient-resources/](http://prepguidelines.com.au/patient-resources/)

Condoms don't prevent all STIs all the time, so anyone who is sexually active should have regular sexual health check-ups.

## Where can I get an STI test?

You can get a test at:

- Your healthcare provider or any GP
- Sexual and reproductive health services
- Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations
- Community health centres
- Medicare Urgent Care Clinics.

In Australia, STI tests at sexual health clinics are often free with a Medicare card. You don't need a [Medicare card](#) to get a sexual health check-up. You can usually walk in without an appointment or referral. If you choose to get a check-up at your GP the fees can vary however, pathology tests are often [bulk billed](#), so these may be free if you have a Medicare card.

If you don't have a Medicare card, there are options. You can apply for one at [How to enrol and get started in Medicare](#), or if you're from overseas and are not eligible for Medicare, your costs may be covered by one of the following arrangements:

- [Reciprocal Health Care Agreements](#)
- [Overseas Visitors Health Cover \(OVHC\)](#)
- [Overseas Student Health Cover \(OSHC\)](#)

When phoning to book an appointment, you can discuss costs and payment arrangements with your chosen clinic.

## Some things to remember

- You could have an STI and not know – STIs often have no symptoms, but if left untreated can have life-long health impacts.
- The key to treating STIs and reducing transmission is early detection and treatment.
- Regular sexual health check-ups are the only way to know if you have an STI.

## Resources

**Department of Health and Aged Care**  
[health.gov.au/STI](http://health.gov.au/STI)

**Health Direct Service Finder**  
[healthdirect.gov.au/australian-health-services](http://healthdirect.gov.au/australian-health-services)

**Emen8 Service Finder**  
[emen8.com.au/find-a-service/](http://emen8.com.au/find-a-service/)

**Health Direct**  
[healthdirect.gov.au/sexually-transmitted-infections-sti](http://healthdirect.gov.au/sexually-transmitted-infections-sti)

**Smartraveller**  
[smartraveller.gov.au/](http://smartraveller.gov.au/)

**PrEP Guidelines**  
[prepguidelines.com.au/patient-resources/](http://prepguidelines.com.au/patient-resources/)

**Get PEP**  
[getpep.info/](http://getpep.info/)



**Staying on top of your sexual health means you can enjoy the moment knowing you're both protected.**

Use protection and book a check-up today.

Visit [health.gov.au/STI](http://health.gov.au/STI) for more information.

