



Beforeplay – It’s the test part *before* the best part.

Young men & 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 getting an STI?

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. STIs among young people often remain undiagnosed and untreated. STIs like gonorrhoea and chlamydia can cause infertility if left untreated, but are easily diagnosed with an STI check and are treatable.

How to start a conversation about sexual health

Being on the same page as your partner(s) when it comes to having sex is important. You should talk with your partner(s) about whether they’ve:

- had a sexual health check recently and been given the all clear or been treated
- practised safe sex, like using barrier protection such as a condom.

Being open with your partner(s) about your sexual health means you can enjoy the moment knowing you’re both protected.

If you’re not quite sure how to approach this subject with your partner, you can visit au.reachout.com/articles/how-to-talk-about-sexual-health

Healthcare professionals regularly speak about STIs and sexual health, so they are also well placed to speak with you about any questions you may have and can provide practical tips to help start a conversation. Your conversation with your healthcare professional will be confidential.

You could have an STI and not even realise

STIs often have no symptoms. That’s why you need to stay on top of your sexual health and get tested regularly.

STI symptoms can include:

- Swelling, itching, or a rash on the genitals or surrounding area or contact area, e.g. around the anus and mouth.
- Bumps, sores or warts on the genitals or surrounding area or contact area, e.g. around the anus and mouth.
- Unusual discharge from the penis or anus, including bleeding.
- Skin changes including sores or ulcers.
- Pain when urinating.

Always be prepared for safe sex – use protection

- Always use a condom or other barrier methods if you have vaginal, oral or anal sex.
- 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.
- 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.
- PrEP is highly effective in preventing HIV infection - talk to your healthcare professional about whether it could be right for you. You can find more resources about PrEP at prepguidelines.com.au/patient-resources/
- 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.

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.

Remember, most STIs are easily treated if caught early and can be cured. Other STIs, such as herpes and HIV, can't be cured, but they can be treated or managed effectively. Your healthcare professional will talk to you about the best treatment options for you.

Resources

Department of Health and Aged Care
health.gov.au/STI

Health Direct Service Finder
healthdirect.gov.au/australian-health-services

Emen8 Service Finder
emen8.com.au/find-a-service/

Health Direct
healthdirect.gov.au/sexually-transmitted-infections-sti

Reach Out
au.reachout.com/articles/how-to-talk-about-sexual-health

PrEP Guidelines
prepguidelines.com.au/patient-resources/



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 for more information.

