



Australian Government

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



Men who have sex with men & STIs – the stuff you should know

Sexually transmissible infections (STIs) are 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.

Sexual health check-ups

It's recommended sexually active men who have sex with men (MSM) have a sexual health check-up every three months. Your healthcare professional can talk to you in more detail about how often to get tested for your specific circumstances.

They can also discuss other issues relevant to your sexual health at your check-up, including vaccinations and prescription for pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP).

Always be prepared for safe sex – use protection

- Talk with your partner(s) about your sexual health. Don't be afraid to be open with them about your health or to ask if they've been tested recently.
- 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.

Where can I get an STI test?

You can get a test at:

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

Remember, anything you talk about with your healthcare professional is confidential and stays between you and them.

There are also sexual health services that specifically cater for MSM if you'd prefer, including specialist care for people living with HIV. You can find a provider at emen8.com.au/find-a-service/

What's Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP)?

Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is an oral medication that prevents HIV in people at risk of infection.

Things to know:

- If used correctly, PrEP can be over 99% effective at preventing HIV transmission.
- PrEP doesn't protect against STIs. Condoms and regular sexual health check-ups are still the best protection against STIs.

- HIV transmission can also be prevented by using condoms during anal or vaginal sex, using sterile injecting equipment, not sharing injecting equipment, and achieving and maintaining undetectable HIV viral loads if you are HIV-positive.

You can find more resources about PrEP at prepguidelines.com.au/patient-resources/

What's Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP)?

Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) is a medication that can sometimes prevent HIV from infecting a person who has been exposed.

Things to know:

- It involves taking HIV medications for 4 weeks after exposure.
- It is best to start PEP as soon as possible, and 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. You can find out more about PEP by talking to a healthcare professional or visit getpep.info/

What should I know about Mpox?

Mpox (formerly monkeypox) is a viral infection that is typically mild, but can cause severe illness and a distinctive rash. It doesn't spread easily between people and is mostly spread through prolonged physical or intimate contact with someone who has mpox, including during sex.

Anyone can get mpox, but most of the cases are in men who have sex with men. Talk to your healthcare provider about the mpox vaccination.

For more information on mpox including symptoms, visit health.gov.au/diseases/monkeypox-mpox

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.
- If you're having sex, you should get a regular sexual health check, even if you use protection every time and feel healthy.
- Regular sexual health check-ups are the only way to know for sure if you have an STI.

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 and 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/

Department of Health and Aged Care - Mpox
health.gov.au/diseases/monkeypox-mpox

Get PEP
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 for more information.

