



Australian Government

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



## In a relationship? Stay on top of your sexual health

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.

### Are my partner(s) and I at risk of STIs?

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

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

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.

### You could have an STI and not even realise

STIs often have no symptoms. That's why it's important to stay on top of your sexual health and test regularly. Symptoms vary depending on the STI and your gender. If you notice any changes, you should talk to a healthcare professional about it.

### 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](https://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.

### Always be prepared for safe sex

Being on the same page as your partner when it comes to sex is important. Make sure you:

- Use protection
  - Always use a condom or dental dam 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.
- Get tested regularly by getting a sexual health check at least once a year.
- 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.
- Pre-exposure prophylaxis (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/](http://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.

## 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 that most STIs are easily treated if detected early, and are usually curable.

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.

## 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.
- Regular sexual health check-ups are the only way to know for sure 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)

**Reach Out**  
[au.reachout.com/articles/how-to-talk-about-sexual-health](http://au.reachout.com/articles/how-to-talk-about-sexual-health)

**PrEP Guidelines**  
[prepguidelines.com.au/patient-resources/](http://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](http://health.gov.au/STI) for more information.

