

What should I do?

If you are sexually active you should visit a GP, family planning, or sexual health clinic regularly for sexual health checks and to discuss any questions you have.

What is a sexual health check?

A sexual health check is a check-up with a health professional for sexual health issues, like sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

Where can I get a sexual health check?

It depends on where you live and what services are close to you. A sexual health check is carried out by a health professional - a Family Planning NSW Clinic, your local GP, a doctor or nurse at a sexual health centre, or a youth health centre. You can find out where the services are in your area by clicking on the link at the end of this factsheet.

Who needs a sexual health check?

It is a good idea for anyone who is sexually active. How often and when you need to have a check-up depends on your lifestyle and sexual activity. A sexual health check is recommended if:

- you think that you have an STI
- you have had unsafe oral, anal or vaginal sex
- you had a condom break or fall off during sex
- your partner has another sexual partner
- you have more than one sexual partner
- you have shared needles for drugs, tattooing or piercing
- you are starting a new sexual relationship

What happens during a sexual health check?

A health professional will usually begin by taking your sexual history. All the information you give the health professional is confidential and kept private. Health professionals are specially trained and are very experienced at making you feel comfortable. Even if you do feel a bit uncomfortable answering these questions it is important you give accurate answers so that you get the best advice and have the right tests and treatment. Some STIs can lead to long-term health problems if not treated properly. Some of the questions they will ask may seem quite personal, for example:

- how many sexual partners have you had?
- what sexual activities have you engaged in?
- do you have sex with men, women or both?

- do you have any symptoms which suggest an STI?
- have you injected drugs or shared injecting equipment?
- do you have any tattoos or body piercings?
- have you been vaccinated for hepatitis B and HPV (human papillomavirus)?

A sexual health check does not always include an examination. Often a urine test is all that is needed. A range of tests may be done including:

- a urine sample
- a blood test
- a swab - sometimes it may be necessary to take swabs from the throat or rectum (inside the anus)
- a vaginal check – sometimes you can take the swab yourself
- a Cervical Screening Test (CST) is also recommended every 5 years for women over 25 years. A CST doesn't check for infections but if you want an STI check it can be done on the same sample.

What questions should I ask at a sexual health check?

A visit to a health professional is a great opportunity to ask questions about your sexual health or to discuss anything that has been worrying you. It's important that you feel comfortable to ask any questions you like. It's also important that the health professional answers your questions and explains everything in a way that you can understand.

Things to find out before your sexual health check:

- is there a cost for the sexual health check?
- do I need a Medicare card?
 - if you don't know the number of your card the clinic will be able to help you.
 - if you are 15 years or older you can apply to get your own Medicare card.
- do I need to make an appointment or is there a drop-in clinic?

During your sexual health check:

- what type of tests do I need? (e.g. blood or urine test, vaginal, throat or anal swabs)
- what are the tests for?
- when is the best time to do the test?
- how long do I need to wait for results of the test and how will I get my results?
- if any of the tests are positive,
 - does the health professional have to tell anyone?

- do I need to tell my partner(s)?
- what are the treatment options?
- does my partner need treatment too?
- will my future fertility, pregnancy or general health be affected?
- will I need to have another test later to check the infection is gone?

What is contact tracing?

If you have an STI, the health professional may mention contact tracing. Contact tracing is a process of contacting all partners you have had recent sexual contact with, as they may also have an infection. These people will also have to get tested to make sure they get the correct treatment. Contact tracing can be done anonymously to protect your privacy. The health professional will discuss the best way to do this depending on your situation. There are useful websites to help with contact tracing like www.letthemknow.org.au

What if I feel uncomfortable during the sexual health check?

If you feel uncomfortable with the health professional, or you feel that the health professional is uncomfortable answering your questions, you can ask if you could see someone else or try another service.

For more information

Family Planning NSW Talkline –

1300 658 886 or www.fpnsw.org.au/talkline

National Relay Service (for deaf people) –

13 36 77

TIS National's interpreting service –

131 450

Visit your nearest Family Planning NSW clinic –

www.fpnsw.org.au/clinics

Family Planning NSW cervical screening information

– <https://www.fpnsw.org.au/changes>

Visit your nearest sexual health clinic –

1800 451 624 or www.health.nsw.gov.au/sexualhealth/Pages/sexual-health-clinics.aspx

STI information in other languages –

www.mhcs.health.nsw.gov.au

www.fpnsw.org.au | talkline 1300 658 886 | shop

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