



Yarning about STIs

Hey Uncle, I think I may have a bit of a problem downstairs...do you know what I mean?

Think I might mate. If you are worried I reckon it might be time you had a chat about STIs with your healthcare worker.

What is an STI Uncle?

STI stands for sexually transmissible infection. They are infections that are passed on through unprotected sex with someone who has an STI. You can catch or give someone an STI through unprotected vaginal, oral and anal sex. If STIs are left untreated, they can cause damage to your body and lead to other health problems. It's important to know about STIs before you start having sex, so that both you and your sexual partner know how to protect yourselves and practice safe sex.

What does safe sex mean Uncle?

Safe sex means always using condoms when having vaginal, oral or anal sex. By practising safe sex, you reduce the risk of catching or giving someone an STI.

How do you catch an STI Uncle?

STIs are passed on during unprotected vaginal, oral or anal sex. This can happen through direct contact with skin or if vaginal fluid, semen or blood are swapped between partners. So the best way to prevent this from happening is to always use a condom when having vaginal, oral or anal sex.

So who should have STI check-ups?

Anyone who is having vaginal, oral or anal sex should go for regular STI check-ups. It's really important that you have regular STI checks if you are under 30, have recently changed sexual partners, if you had sex without using a condom, or the condom breaks. You won't usually notice any symptoms, which means you can have an STI and not even know it. If you find out you have an STI, it's really important you tell anyone you have been having sex with. This way they can be tested and treated as well. Your doctor or nurse can help you decide who could be at risk and help you contact them. These services are confidential. When you are under 18, your parents or guardians cannot access your health records without your permission, except if you are unable to give that permission. If you would like to talk to someone about having an STI check you can contact Family Planning NSW Talkline (1300 658 886) or NSW Sexual Health Infolink (1800 451 624).



How long does it take to get symptoms from an STI?

Most people won't notice any symptoms if they have an STI. So the only way to know if you have an STI is to have an STI check-up. All it usually takes is a pee test and treatment for an STI is simple. Because you can be infected and not know, you can pass the infection on to others. If left untreated, STIs can cause further damage to your body. So you should have an STI check-up.



Going to the doctor for an STI check-up

Sometimes people feel shame talking about STIs. But going for an STI check-up doesn't hurt and is confidential. This means that it is kept between you and your healthcare worker. Healthcare workers won't judge you either—they've seen it all before!

You will get asked some general health questions and then some more personal questions about you and the type of sex you have been having. This is to help the doctor or nurse decide what test you need. These are safe and private appointments between you and your doctor or nurse.

You can get an STI check-up at any age; even if you are under 16. The test is really simple and is usually a pee test. Sometimes you might need a blood test or the doctor or nurse may need to do a physical check-up to see if you have any signs of infection.



Don't be ashamed about getting an STI check-up because you think people will find out. Doctors and nurses must keep your information private and only need to involve others if they think you, or another person is at risk of harm. But they will talk about this with you.

Family Planning NSW specialises in sexual health information and services for all. Our friendly doctors and nurses are trained to know all the latest information about STIs. They can advise you about methods to help prevent STIs and the best treatment options if you do have an infection. You can make an appointment just to have a chat about sexual health if you have never been for a sexual health check-up.



You can contact **Family Planning NSW Talkline 1300 658 886**, a confidential service to answer all your questions about reproductive and sexual health over the phone and by email.
www.fpnsw.org.au/talkline

You can also contact NSW Sexual Health Infolink on 1800 451 624 or get information from the NSW STI program unit at playsafe.health.nsw.gov.au

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