



Getting tested for BBVs and STIs

Where can I get tested?

Testing for STIs and BBVs is simple, quick and free at your local health clinic – just ask.

How often should I test?

If you have sex regularly it's a good idea to get tested for STIs at least every six to 12 months.

STIs and BBVs don't always have symptoms or signs. Or you may have symptoms for a while but they go away.

The only way of knowing whether you have an STI or BBV is to get tested.

Get tested as soon as you can if:

- you've had sex without a condom with a new sexual partner
- something has happened like a broken condom
- you've shared injecting or tattooing equipment with other people.
- you can ask to get tested for STIs and BBVs as part of your health check.

You can visit your clinic and ask to be tested for STIs and BBVs any time.

Some STIs and BBVs can't be picked up in tests straight away. The clinic may test you and ask you to come back for another test in a few weeks. It's important to do this whether or not you've had sex or shared injecting or tattooing equipment in the meantime.

How are the tests done?

There are different types of tests for different STIs and BBVs.

To work out what tests you need the doctor or nurse may need to ask questions about:

- how often you have sex and how many sexual partners you've had recently
- whether you're gay
- whether you inject drugs or recently had a tattoo done.



These questions are personal but try not to be embarrassed. It's all confidential – your answers just help the doctor work out which tests to do.

The doctor or nurse may ask to examine your genitals or inside your mouth. This is because some STIs can be checked for just by looking.

The main thing is don't get stressed. The doctors and nurses at the clinic do these examinations every day. The more you get tested the more normal all this will seem. The clinic staff know that getting tested is part of looking after your health.

Types of test

- **Saliva tests:** some STIs can be checked for in saliva. The nurse will get a small amount of your saliva for testing. They might wipe the swab around your mouth for you, or they might ask you to get the sample yourself.
- **Urine tests:** some STIs are tested for in pee. You will be given a jar to fill with pee.
- **Blood tests – full test:** to test for some STIs and BBVs the clinic will need to get a sample of your blood. The sample is taken by using a clean, disposable syringe. The clinic will send the blood sample off to a laboratory for testing.
- **Blood test – finger prick:** some STIs can be tested for using a small amount of blood taken by pricking your finger.
- **Syphilis rapid tests:** syphilis can be tested for using a small kit called a rapid test. The test gives a result in about 20 minutes. This test just tells the doctor whether you might have syphilis. If the test is positive, the clinic will get a blood sample and send it to the lab for a full test.
- **HIV rapid tests:** HIV can be tested for using a small kit called a rapid test. The test gives a result in about 20 minutes. This test just tells the doctor whether you might have HIV. If the test is positive, the clinic will get a blood sample and send it to the lab for a full test. (For more about HIV see www.atsihiv.org.au)
- **Testing vaginal discharge:** some STIs that women get cause a discharge or extra fluid coming from the vagina. The nurse or doctor may need to get a swab of the discharge for testing. Try not to be embarrassed – they do these tests often. The test will be done in private. It is not painful.



- **Discharge from the penis:** some STIs that men get cause a discharge or extra fluid coming from the penis. The nurse or doctor may need to get a swab of the discharge for testing. Try not to be embarrassed – they do these tests often. The test will be done in private. It is not painful.
- **Discharge from the anus or bum:** some STIs can cause a discharge or extra fluid coming from the anus or bum. The nurse or doctor may need to get a swab of the discharge for testing. Try not to be embarrassed – they do these tests often. The test will be done in private. It is not painful.
- **Discharge from ulcers and sores:** some STIs cause ulcers or sores and the nurse or doctor may need to get a swab of the discharge from the sore for testing. The test will be done in private.

Will the test be done in private?

Yes.

Some clinics are busy and there might just be a curtain between you and the next patient. If you're embarrassed about other people hearing your conversation with the doctor or nurse just ask if you can speak with them somewhere more private.

How will I get the results of the test?

Some STI testing is done at the clinic using rapid tests.

Rapid test results are not final. They need to be followed up with a laboratory test. The sample is sent to the lab and the lab tells your doctor the result. Your doctor or nurse will then let you know. Lab results are usually sent back to the clinic in about a week.

If I have an STI or BBV, who else will be told?

Your partner will not be told about your test result without your permission. No-one else in your family or community will be told about your test result without your permission.

Government health departments need to know if a person is diagnosed with certain STIs and BBVs. This is so we know whether STI and BBV rates are going up or down in the community. Your name will not be given to the department – just a code. This is to protect your privacy.



If I have an STI, who should I tell?

If you find out you have an STI or BBV, you will need to let your sexual partners know they should get tested. This is to make sure they don't have an STI too. This is called 'contact tracing'.

Contact tracing is not about blame. It's just to make sure that as many people as possible who may have an STI or BBV get tested and treated. This will help us knock out STIs and BBVs in the community.

The clinic can help you with contact tracing – but only with your permission. This is confidential – the clinic will let people you have had sex with know that it's time to have a test. The clinic will not mention your name to the people they contact.

The [Better to know](#) website has advice about the ways you can let people you've had sex with know that they need to have an STI test – including how to do this anonymously – without giving your name.

Getting treated

Most STIs are easy to treat. But being told you have an STI can be a shock. It can be hard to take in what you're being told about treatment and making sure you don't pass the STI on to other people.

The most important thing is to make sure you understand what the doctor and nurse are explaining about taking meds. If you don't understand just say so.

Don't be shame – it's better to ask and staff at the clinic will understand if you're feeling stressed.

Retesting – how often to test?

Getting treated for an STI or BBV doesn't stop you picking up that STI again.

The same goes for hepatitis C. Hepatitis C can be cured but this doesn't protect you from picking up hepatitis C again.

It's important to keep using condoms and to keep testing regularly – at least every six to 12 months.

Let's look after our health and get tested for STIs and BBVs. If we all test and get treated, we can stop the spread of STIs and BBVs in our community.

The information in this factsheet is not a substitute for professional medical advice. To get a diagnosis and advice about treatment, contact your local Aboriginal health service or clinic nurse.

