

Tests for sexually transmitted infections

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are infections you can get when having unprotected sex or skin-on-skin contact with someone. STIs can be serious and may not go away by themselves. It is important to be tested and treated if necessary. Some STIs have no symptoms, and you may not know that you have an STI.

Why would I be tested?

You may wish to be tested because:

- you and a new partner are beginning a sexual relationship
- you or your partner have had unprotected sex
- you think you have a STI
- you want a routine sexual health check.

If you want a test or you are unsure about whether you need one, talk to your doctor or nurse, sexual health service or Family Planning staff. They provide the tests and treatment.

If you have an infection, your partner will also need to be tested and treated.

The only way to know for sure you have an STI is to get tested.

What do I need to know about STI tests?

You can find out all you need to know by talking to the doctor or nurse who will be taking the test.

You can discuss:

- whether or not you need a test
- the STI(s) you think you may have
- confidentiality - your tests can be coded so that your name is not used
- the different tests you may need
- what to do if a test shows that you have an STI
- when and how you will find out about the test results
- how to practise safer sex in the future
- if there are any costs involved.

The discussion will help you to make an informed decision before giving your consent for a test.

STI tests

STI tests are confidential and the only way to be sure you don't have an STI.

They are available from:

- sexual health services and clinics
- Family Planning clinics
- your local general practice.

Test for STIs	External exam	Blood sample	Swab	Urine sample	Internal exam
Chlamydia Bacterial infection that can cause pelvic inflammatory disease and infertility			•	•	•
Genital herpes Viral infection on the mouth and lips, penis, and in and around the vagina and anus	•		•		
Genital warts Viral infection with human papilloma-virus (HPV) causing warty lumps in and around the vagina or penis and around the anus	•				
Gonorrhoea Bacterial infection of the genital area, rectum and throat that can cause pelvic infection and infertility	•		•		•
Syphilis Bacterial infection of the skin and genital area. Late stages can cause damage to the heart and brain	•	•	•		
Non-specific urethritis Viral or bacterial infection of the male urethra (the tube that carries urine from the body)	•		•	•	
Trichomonas vaginalis Organism that infects the vagina causing a discharge.	•		•		•

To be sure you don't have an STI, get tested at a Family Planning or sexual health clinic or by your general practice.

Condoms will help to protect you and your partner(s), although they do not guarantee prevention of STIs.

Test for Infections transmitted sexually and in other ways	External exam	Blood sample	Swab	Urine sample	Internal exam
Hepatitis A Viral infection, usually transmitted by contaminated food or water, that attacks and damages the liver		•			
Hepatitis B Bloodborne and sexually transmitted viral infection that attacks and damages the liver		•			
Hepatitis C Bloodborne viral infection that attacks and damages the liver		•			
HIV Bloodborne and sexually transmitted viral infection that attacks the immune system making it difficult for the body to fight infection		•			
Pubic lice or crabs Small lice which live in the pubic hair causing itching and inflammation.	•				
Tests for Infections affecting genitals that may not be sexually transmitted	External exam	Blood sample	Swab	Urine sample	Internal exam
Thrush or candidiasis Yeast organism more commonly infecting the vagina causing itching and discharge	•		•		•
Cystitis Bacterial infection of the bladder lining, causing pain when passing urine and possibly backache and stomach pain				•	
Bacterial vaginosis May result from an imbalance of normal bacteria in a healthy vagina and can cause a discharge.			•		•

Testing for STIs

Visual examination

After an examination, the doctor/nurse may be able to see any infection, decide what other tests may be needed and, if necessary, treat you.

Blood test

The doctor or nurse will take blood from your arm and send it to a laboratory for testing to see if you have an STI.

Swab test

The doctor or nurse takes the swab test by gently pressing a swab against any sores, ulcers or discharge. The specimen is sent to a laboratory for testing.

Urine test

The doctor or nurse will ask for a urine sample, which is sent to a laboratory for testing.

Internal examination

The doctor or nurse may want to look inside your vagina and may take a swab if an infection seems likely. You can ask to take your own swab - your doctor or nurse will give you the swab for you to swab inside your vagina. The swab will be sent to a laboratory to be tested.

How do I use a condom?

Check the condom pack to make sure the expiry date has not passed.

1 Open the packet carefully. Fingernails, rings and teeth can tear condoms. Make sure your penis does not touch your partner's vagina, mouth or anus before being covered by a condom.



2 Check that the condom is facing the right way. Pinch the top of the condom to remove any air.



3 Roll the condom on to the hard penis all the way down to the base. Use a water-based lubricant. Oil-based lubricants such as petroleum jelly can cause latex (rubber) condoms to break. Ask your pharmacist for advice about a suitable product.



4 After coming, and when withdrawing, hold the condom on to the base of the penis so that no semen gets spilt.



Wrap the used condom in tissue or toilet paper and put it in the rubbish.

Use a new condom and lubricant each time you have sex!

Where can I get condoms?

You can get condoms and, sometimes, oral dams from your general practice, Family Planning and sexual health clinics. Condoms are also available from pharmacies, supermarkets, pubs, clubs and some dairies. Female condoms are available from Family Planning clinics.

Where can I find out more about STIs?

- Student health services at your university, polytechnic or school
- The public health nurse at your school
- Sexual health services listed in the white pages and at www.hpv.org.nz/help/where.htm
- Family Planning on 0800 INFOLINE (0800 4636 5463) or at www.fpanz.org.nz
- Your general practice doctor or nurse
- www.hpv.org.nz or Herpes/HPV Helpline 0508 11 12 13
- Healthline 0800 611 116.

The four guides

- 1 What is gonorrhoea? Code HE1442
- 2 What is genital herpes? Code HE1443
- 3 What are genital warts? Code HE1444
- 4 What are STI tests? Code HE1445

See also *Chlamydia: Information Guide* Code HP4609

This resource is available from www.healthed.govt.nz or the Authorised Provider at your DHB.

New Zealand Government



Revised March 2010. Reprinted April 2010. Code HE1445

what are
STI tests?
1 2 3 4
of four information guides