

FACTSHEET

KEY SEXUAL HEALTH MESSAGES



This factsheet includes key messages you can use to answer any questions young people might have about STIs, contraception, consent, and healthy relationships.

**For professionals
working with
young people**

You don't need to know everything about sexual health to provide valuable support and information to young people. It's important to be confident in answering common questions and know when and where to send young people to get more information and support.



KEY SEXUAL HEALTH MESSAGES



Health information and services

Where can young people find good information about sexual health and relationships?

The [Play Safe](#) and [Take Blaktion](#) websites provide sexual health information for young people in NSW.

Who can young people talk to if they have questions?

Young people can [chat with a nurse](#) for free at the Sexual Health Infolink if they have any questions about relationships, their body or STI and HIV prevention, testing and treatment.

Young people can also ask health professionals, like GPs, for information and advice.

Sexually transmissible infections (STIs) and HIV

What is an STI?

STIs are infections caused by a bacteria, virus or parasite. STIs can be passed from person to person during sexual activity (oral, vaginal and anal sex) with someone who already has an STI.

What is HIV?

HIV is a virus that attacks the immune system, which is where our body fights infection. If left untreated, HIV will damage the immune system to the point where AIDS develops.

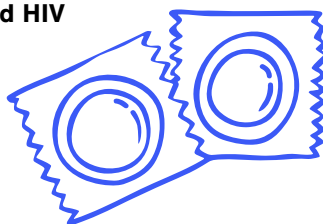
STIs usually have no symptoms

Most STIs have no symptoms which is why regular testing is so important. Getting a regular STI test is a normal part of looking after your health and nothing to be ashamed of.

Most STIs are treatable

Most STIs (such as chlamydia, gonorrhoea, and syphilis) are treatable and all STIs are manageable. Getting a regular STI test can help you stay healthy and get treatment if needed.

How to prevent STIs and HIV



- Use condoms and dams during sex.
- Take PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) if you are at risk of HIV. PrEP is a medication taken to prevent HIV for people at risk of becoming infected.
- Take PEP (post exposure prophylaxis) if you think you have been exposed to HIV. PEP is a medication you take for one month to reduce the risk of getting HIV.
- Test for STIs and HIV every 3-12 months. Testing is important and part of a healthy and confident sex life.

KEY SEXUAL HEALTH MESSAGES



STI and HIV testing

Regular testing is important

You should get tested if you are sexually active (including oral sex) every 3-12 months, if you experience symptoms, or if you change sexual partners.

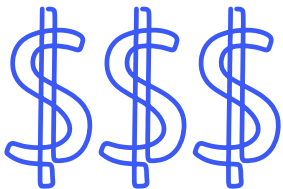
Testing is confidential

Testing is confidential and private. No one will know you have had an STI test unless you tell them.

STI and HIV testing is quick and easy

- STI testing is quick and easy. It involves a urine sample or a self-collected swab, and a blood test. A doctor will tell you what tests are needed.
- Testing for HIV involves a blood test.
- STI and HIV testing can be done at a GPs, Aboriginal Medical Services, youth health clinics and sexual health clinics.

How much does STI and HIV testing cost?



STI and HIV testing is free of charge if a young person has a Medicare card and visits a bulk-billing GP, Aboriginal Medical Service (AMS) or youth health clinic. Out of pocket costs may apply for people without a Medicare card or who visit non-bulk billing doctors.

Many sexual health clinics will offer free STI testing to people without a Medicare card who want to get tested. Call the [NSW Sexual Health Infolink](#) to find your closest testing location or visit the Play Safe website to use the [STI service testing locator tool](#).

KEY SEXUAL HEALTH MESSAGES



Contraception

Condoms protect against STIs and unplanned pregnancy (for sex that can result in pregnancy)

Condoms are the only method that offers protection from both unplanned pregnancy (for sex that can result in pregnancy) and STIs. Condoms are up to 98% effective when used correctly.

Make sure you know how to use condoms

Familiarise yourself with condoms, how to use them and where to get them so you're prepared.

Tip: Share this ['How to use condoms'](#) guide with young people.

Dental dams can be used for oral sex

Dental dams can be used during oral sex on a vagina or anus to prevent STI transmission.

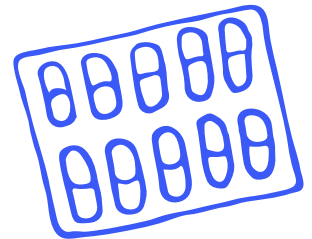
Tip: Share this [resource](#) on how to make a dental dam using a condom.

Condoms are easy to find

Free condoms are available at sexual health clinics and through the [Freedom Condom](#) program. Condoms can also be bought at pharmacies, supermarkets, and petrol stations.

There are lots of contraception options

There are lots of contraception options. Some last longer than others. A GP can help you find the one that's right for you. Condoms still need to be used as they are the only type of contraception that can prevent pregnancy (for sex that can result in pregnancy) and STIs.



Emergency contraception is available

Emergency contraception is sometimes known as the morning after pill. The morning-after pill does not need a doctor's script. It can be bought at a pharmacy. It's a type of emergency contraception that can prevent unplanned pregnancy. The sooner it is taken, the more effective it is.

KEY SEXUAL HEALTH MESSAGES



Consent and healthy relationships

There is a legal age for consent

In NSW, a person has to be 16 years or older to be able to give consent.

Consent can be revoked at any time

Sexual consent is an ongoing and freely given agreement between two (or more) people who are engaging in any type of sexual activity together.

Consent can't always be given for oral sex

A person does not consent to a sexual activity unless they say or do something to communicate consent. A person also does not consent if they are forced, blackmailed or intimidated to participate in the sexual activity, if they are asleep or unconscious, or if they are affected by alcohol or drugs which means that they are incapable of consenting.

Every person is different

Everyone has the right to decide to have or not to have sex.

Trust and respect

A healthy relationship is based on mutual respect, trust, and open communication.

Talking about sex is important

It's important to discuss comfort, contraception, and boundaries with your partners. Make sure everyone feels safe and respected.



KEY SEXUAL HEALTH MESSAGES



Stigma and discrimination

Sexual health is nothing to be ashamed of

Looking after your sexual health is just another part of staying healthy.

Doctors have seen it all before

Doctors and health professionals are here to help, not judge. They've seen it all before, so there's no need to be embarrassed.

It's normal to have questions

There's no 'silly' question when it comes to sexual health. Ask anything – it's all part of taking care of yourself.



You're not alone

Many people have questions or concerns about sexual health. You're not alone.

Tip: Let them know about [Nurse Nettie](#) – a qualified sexual health nurse – who is 100% confidential and anonymous.

STAY UP TO DATE



Clinical information evolves. Many reliable sources, like the [Play Safe](#) and [Play Safe Pro](#) websites, offer current guidance for youth workers and young people. Subscribe to the [Play Safe Pro newsletter](#) to stay up to date with our free resources, factsheets, tools, and interactive activities.

If you can't answer a question, or need more support, advise the young people you work with to contact [Nurse Nettie](#) or the [NSW Sexual Health Infolink](#).