

## **When should I test for an STI?**

With Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) on the rise in England and a recent case of antibiotic-resistant gonorrhoea detected in a man in his early 20s in December, it's now more important than ever for people to get tested regularly if you are having sex without a condom with new or casual partners.

This UK Health Security Agency guide on who should get tested and when may help you stay clear of any long-lasting STI-related health problems.

### Who can get an STI?

Any sexually active person, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity or sexual orientation can contract an STI. An STI is an infection passed from someone during sexual contact. STIs can be transmitted via vaginal, oral or anal sex, and sometimes during intimate skin-to-skin contact. It's also really important to know that you can have a STI and show no symptoms at all.

### How do I reduce my chances of getting an STI?

To avoid contracting an STI, wearing a condom consistently and correctly during sexual contact with all new or casual partners is essential.

### What are the symptoms of STIs?

Different STIs have different symptoms, and it is important to be aware of this to know what to look out for. If you have recently developed any [STI-related symptoms](#) such as an unusual discharge, avoid sexual contact and get a sexual health screen as soon as you can.

However, many people have no symptoms when they have an STI and that is why it is important to get tested to detect and treat the infection and also to prevent passing it on to someone else.

### When should I get tested?

Regular testing for STIs is essential for good sexual health and everyone should have an STI screen, including an HIV test, annually if having sex without a condom with new or casual partners.

Sexually active women and other people with a uterus or ovaries under 25 years old should be screened for chlamydia on a change of a sexual partner or every year.

Gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men should test for HIV and STIs annually or every 3 months if having sex without a condom with new or casual partners.

### Where can I get tested?

STI testing is free and available through online self-sampling services or by [contacting your local sexual health service](#). If you live in London, [Sexual Health London](#) is an online self-sampling service that offers free and quick STI self-sampling kits as well as emergency contraception that is always sent to you in discreet packaging.

### Why should I get tested?

Everyone should value and take responsibility for their own sexual health and wellbeing. Sexually transmitted infections are very common and, while they can lead to severe health problems such as infertility if they aren't treated, regular testing will ensure that the infection is detected and treated early. Some STIs are also becoming more difficult to treat because of antibiotic-resistance, so the

best way to protect both you and your partner is through regular testing. The consistent and correct use of condoms with new and casual sexual partners is the best defence against all STIs.

Further advice on STIs, including how to access sexual health services, is available through [Sexwise](#) and the national sexual health helpline on 0300 123 7123 (9am to 8pm Monday to Friday, 11am to 4pm Saturday to Sunday).