



Guide to STIs and STI Testing

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This package was created by the Healthy U program at the University of Manitoba. Healthy U is a UM student group made up of a team of friendly volunteers who are trained student health educators.

We provide students with validated health information through our health packages and outreach events, online resources, and one-on-one support. Health topics that we provide resources on include mental health, sexual health, physical health, substance use, social and cultural wellness, and finding a balance.

Please reach out to us if you have any questions at:
healthyu@umanitoba.ca

What are STIs?

STIs, or Sexually Transmitted Infections, are illnesses you can catch from sexual contact.

Some are spread through fluids, meaning you would catch it by exchanging body fluids (i.e. semen, vaginal fluid, or anal fluid). Others can be spread simply by making skin-to-skin contact, meaning you could catch it without having penetrative sex.

Can STIs be cured?

There are different types of STIs which are either caused by bacteria, parasites, or viruses. Ones caused by bacteria or parasites **can be cured**.

- Chlamydia
- Gonorrhea
- Syphilis
- Pubic Lice
- Trichonomiasis (trich)



curable

STIs caused by viruses **cannot be cured, but they can be treated**.

- Human Papilloma Virus (HPV, Genital Warts)
- Herpes
- HIV (which may lead to AIDS)
- Hepatitis A, B, or C



treatable



Some ways to prevent STIs

Condoms and dental dams

A dental dam is a sheet of latex that can cover the labia or anus for oral sex. You can make one by cutting a condom down the middle & flattening it out.

Lube can also help decrease your risk!

Regular STI testing

At least once per year and with each change in partner. Even if you feel fine!

Communication

It is important to talk about sex with your sexual partners. Has your partner been tested since their last partner? Are they okay with using condoms or dental dams? [Planned Parenthood](#) has resources to talk to your partner about STI testing.

Alternate forms of affection

Things like kissing, cuddling, mutual masturbation, and massages are some lower-risk ways of sharing affection.

Be mindful of number of sexual partners

Having sex with multiple people does NOT mean you will get STI's, but having fewer partners does lower your risk (especially if they've been tested and are STI-free).

Never share needles or syringes

HIV and Hepatitis C can also be spread through the blood. Never share or re-use needles. Make sure you get your tattoos or piercings from licensed shops.

Immunization

Ask your doctor about shots to avoid Hepatitis A and B, and some strains of HPV!



How do I know if I have an STI?

Getting tested is the only way to know for sure, since many people who have STIs don't have any symptoms.

If you do have symptoms, you may experience any of the following:

- Rash, redness, blisters, or lumps
- Itching/irritation
- Burning or bleeding when you pee
- Swelling
- Pelvic pain
- Discharge that's different from your normal (may smell foul or have a different colour or texture)

Adapted from serc.mb.ca

What about UTI's?

Urinary tract infections (UTI's) are **not sexually transmitted, but are common after sex**. They happen much more often to women. They are caused by bacteria getting into the urethra and then traveling to the bladder. This can happen during sex, from toilet paper (always wipe front to back!), from wearing a damp swimsuit for a long time, or from a number of other things.

After sex, always pee as soon as you can. This flushes out bacteria that made its way into your urethra.

If you think you have a UTI, drink plenty of water and visit your family doctor. UTI's can present similarly to STIs, so make sure you get tested for both.

Signs of a UTI:

- Pain, burning, or bleeding when you pee
- Needing to pee often, even if it's just a little bit
- Not being able to pee at all, even if you feel like you need to
- Swelling
- Pelvic pain
- Feeling generally unwell



Should I be tested for STI's?

If you are sexually active, the answer is always YES!

Regular testing is recommended for anyone who is sexually active.

What is sexual activity? **Any kind of intimacy that includes skin to skin contact, counts as sex! This includes oral sex (receiving or giving), vaginal sex, anal sex (top/bottom), BDSM (bondage, discipline, dominance and submission).**

When are some good times to get tested?

- You have a new sexual partner(s).
- You or your partners have other sexual partners and it's been more than three to six months since your last test.
- You notice any changes in your body.
- You had sex with someone who has an STI.
- You had sex without a condom or the condom broke.

Because more than half of people with chlamydia or gonorrhea don't have any symptoms, it is important to be tested for STI's every year or with each change in partner.

Even if you have been getting tested each year and with each change in partner, visit a Health Care Provider if you experience any pain, rashes, sores, or unusual discharge from or around your genitals.



What Happens When You Get STI Testing?

Health history

Your health care provider (HCP) will ask questions about your sexual health history. This is the most important part of testing as it will help you get the tests that you need. No need to be embarrassed, sex is normal and HCP's ask these questions all the time.

Physical exam

Your HCP may need to take a look at your genitals, throat or anus for sores, irritation, or discharge.

The health care provider will need samples to send to the lab, which may include the following:

Urine sample: you are given a cup and a chance to use the washroom. You just have to pee into the cup.

Cheek swab: The health care provider will swipe a soft swab against the inside of your cheek.

Blood test: They may either prick your finger or draw some blood from your arm.

Testing your sores: They may take a sample of fluid from any sores or blisters.

Swab: A swab may be taken from your throat, penis, vagina, cervix, or anus.

Your results

Some STI's take longer than others to diagnose or check for. You may find out in the same visit, or you may have to wait a few weeks for lab results.

What happens if I have an STI?

If you test positive for STIs, your doctor will discuss treatment with you.

If you are given antibiotics, it is very important you **take the full course of medication**, even if you feel better earlier.

Make sure you avoid sex until your treatment is complete, or until your doctor says its safe. Remember that if you infect someone, they can infect you back - make sure you both finish treatment before you have further sexual contact.

You will have the option of either notifying your sexual partner(s) yourself, or having the clinic call for you - they won't use your name, they will just tell the person they need to get tested. Either way, your previous partners who may be at risk *must* be notified.



UM Resources

STIs and STI Testing

University Health Services (UHS)

UHS has health care providers that can do STI testing.

ACW-Lot temporary trailer (behind the Isbister building)

204-474-8411

<https://umanitoba.ca/student-supports/health-wellness/university-health-service>

University Pharmacy

The University Pharmacy is a full service pharmacy. Health care products, cosmetics, dorm essentials, healthy snacks, prescription items, and immunizations.

111 University Centre

204-474-9323

<https://umanitoba.ca/campus-services/university-centre-pharmacy>

Health and Wellness

The Health and Wellness Educator is a Registered Psychiatric Nurse and available to talk about health and wellness topics.

469 UMSU University Centre (within the SCC)

204-295-9032

healthandwellness@umanitoba.ca

<https://umanitoba.ca/student-supports/health-wellness>

Healthy U

Healthy U can provide student with information about health and wellness topics.

<https://www.healthyuofm.com/>

Women's Centre

The Women's Centre offers condoms, pregnancy tests, and free menstrual products.

190 Helen Glass Centre

womensrep@umsu.ca

<https://umsu.ca/student-clubs-associations/student-clubs/womens-centre/>

Off Campus Resources

STIs and STI Testing

You can access STI testing with your family doctor, walk-in clinic, or Access Centre.

[Nine Circles Community Health Centre](#)

204-940-6000

<https://ninecircles.ca/>

[Klinik](#)

204-784-4090

<https://klinik.mb.ca/>

[Women's Health Clinic](#)

204-947-1517

<https://womenshealthclinic.org/>

[NorWest Co-op Community Health](#)

204-940-2020

<https://norwestcoop.ca/>

[Mount Carmel Clinic](#)

204-582-2311

<https://www.mountcarmel.ca/>

[Youville Community Health Resource Centre](#)

204-255-4840

youville.ca/health-centre

[Aboriginal Health & Wellness Centre of Winnipeg](#)

204-925-3700

<https://ahwc.ca/>

[Family Doctor Finder](#)

If you do Not have a family physician but would like to connect, you can call the Family Doctor Finder line for assistance.

204-786-7111

<https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/familydoctorfinder/>