

Health checks

For women

Pap smear

A pap smear is necessary twelve months after you become sexually active and then once every two years. A pap smear can detect early warning signs of cancer and some other infections. Your GP can carry out a pap smear.

Breast checks

Breast size and shape change regularly as a result of menstrual cycles, pregnancy and weight fluctuations. Occasionally changes in breasts can be an early sign of breast cancer. GPs can carry out breast checks and regular self-examinations can be helpful.

For men

Self-examination of the testes (balls) is recommended each month to detect any early signs of cancer of the testes.

You may be embarrassed going to a doctor but remember they deal with this all the time. Most doctors will be glad that you have come in for treatment or advice as the sooner you see a doctor, the lower the risk of any long term effects.

More information

- Talk to a GP.
- Call Lifeline on 131 114.
- Call Kids Help Line on 1800 55 1800.
- Call your local Community Health Centre (look under Health Services in the information pages at the front of your phone book).
- Visit the Family Planning Association in your local area.
- Visit a Sexual Health Clinic in your local area.
- www.healthinsite.gov.au

If these services can't help you they can usually give you the contact details of a service in your area that can.



Produced by The Commonwealth Bank
and AMA Youth Health Advocate Program.

SEX

and your health



Let's talk about it

Making decisions about what is right for you is important not only for your physical health but also your general well being. Sometimes you can be pressured to have sex and sometimes pressured not to have sex. It is up to you when you decide to have sex and it is important to remember that it's OK to take your time to make decisions. Sex does not just mean sexual intercourse. It also includes things like cuddling, kissing, stroking, mutual masturbation and oral sex.

Contraception

There are many contraceptive methods available. It is important to find out which of these will suit you best and to discuss the options with your doctor. Everybody is different and factors such as lifestyle need to be considered. It is important for both males and females to take responsibility for contraception. Common contraceptive methods used by young people include:

Condoms (male and female)

Condoms are the only form of contraception that protect against Sexually Transmissible Infections (STIs).

The 'Pill'

Is taken as a tablet by the female. Prescriptions are given by your GP or doctor at a family planning clinic.

Depo Provera

Is an injection which prevents pregnancy for 3 months. There is a risk of irregular periods and some bleeding. A doctor gives the injections.

The Emergency Contraception Pill

If you have had unprotected sex you can get this oral pill from a doctor. It MUST be taken within 72 hours of unprotected sexual intercourse to prevent pregnancy.

Sexually Transmissible Infections (STIs)

STI refers to any infection that can be passed on from one person to another during sexual activity (oral, vaginal or anal). There are lots of STIs. Some cause mild genital irritation like pubic lice (crabs). Other infections like genital herpes stay in your body for life. If left untreated others such as chlamydia and gonorrhoea might result in you not being able to have children. Young people can contract the HIV virus. People with HIV can develop AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) related illnesses and die.

Hepatitis C

Although not an STI, Hepatitis C is affecting many Australians and is passed on via contact with infected blood, as are HIV and Hepatitis B. Injecting drugs dramatically increases the risk of getting Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV.

Signs

A person may have an STI like chlamydia but suffer no obvious signs. Common symptoms of STIs include:

- Unusual discharge from the penis or vagina
- Lower abdominal pain or pain during intercourse
- Pain while passing urine
- Ulcers, lumps or sores in the genital area
- Rashes or itching in the genital area
- Pain in the pelvic region

Some people believe that if a person is well dressed, clean and tidy they will not have an STI. This is not necessarily true. Anyone can be infected with an STI so it is important to always practise safer sex.

Safer sex

Safer sex aims to minimise exchange of body fluids (eg blood, semen, and vaginal secretions) which is how most STIs are spread. The best way to achieve this is by using a condom (male or female), gloves and / or dams (square of latex rubber held over the vagina or anus during oral sex). Condoms, dams and gloves need to be used consistently and correctly, with plenty of water-based lubricant. It is important to remember that safer sex is also about feeling safe with your sexual partner and in control of the situation. Remember alcohol and drugs can lead to situations where you may lose total control.

- Talk to your partner openly and honestly about safer sex.
- Always use condoms (male or female), gloves and dams.
- Stay in control and make sure both partners feel comfortable enough to initiate and terminate sexual activity at any time.
- Know the facts so you can make informed choices and decisions.
- Remember that not everyone is having sex. About 50% of Australian 18 year olds are, and 50% are not.
- Have regular sexual health checks and if you have an STI tell your sexual partner(s).