

Testing for Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)

Who Should Get Tested?

Anyone who is sexually active should think about testing for sexually transmitted infections. The CDC recommends that women test for chlamydia annually until age 26. They recommend that men who have sex with men test for STIs every four to six months. Anyone who has had unprotected oral, anal or vaginal sex should consider testing. New CDC guidelines recommend routine HIV testing.

What Tests Should I Do?

To determine what tests you need to do, start with our online information: <https://healthcenter.ucsc.edu/sti>. Here you will be guided through information about STIs and a set of options for testing. **Be sure to test the appropriate parts of your body. For some people this will include a throat swab or an anal swab.** If you want accurate information, you need to do accurate testing. Another way to decide what testing is best for you is to consult with a nurse at the Student Health Center (Nurse Advice Line: 831-459-2591) or a Health Educator at Student Health Outreach & Promotion (SHOP: 831-459-3772). We can help you determine what testing is best for you and discuss how to reduce your risk of an STI.

Getting Tested for STIs: Order It Yourself or See a Clinician?

- If you have **no symptoms**, you can order your own STI testing. Start by visiting the online information site: <https://healthcenter.ucsc.edu/sti>. You will be guided through information to help you decide what tests you want and the best way to get them. Test costs will vary depending on your insurance coverage; information is linked to the website. If you have no symptoms, you can place your STI test orders using our Health e-Messenger system. Log into your Health e-Messenger account and complete the testing questionnaire, then go to the lab for testing. Negative test results are sent to you through the Health e-Messenger system. We will call you if any of your tests are positive.

Free and anonymous oral HIV testing is available much of the year at SHOP. You get the results in 20 minutes. You can find out more about this by calling SHOP at 831-459-3772 or visiting their website: healthcenter.ucsc.edu/shop.

- **If you have symptoms or more questions about STIs, talk with a nurse, visit SHOP, or make an appointment with a clinician.** A consultation with the triage nurse is free to any registered student. Visits at SHOP are free to any student. Clinician visits at the Health Center generate fees based on your insurance coverage. Visits with the triage nurse are by walk-in or by calling the Nurse Advice Line: 831-459-2591. The Nurse Advice Line is checked regularly Monday through Friday between 9 am and 4 pm, except for Holidays.

Test at the Right Time!

There is a delay between when a person is exposed to an infection and when testing for the infection is accurate. If you test too soon, you will not get accurate information. On the back of this handout is a description of common STIs and when you can accurately test for them. **For the most part, we recommend that you wait at least three weeks between a risky encounter and STI testing.** For many people it will be sensible to test at three weeks, three months and even six months. If you have more questions about when to test, speak with a nurse, a health educator at SHOP, or a clinician.

Want More Information?

For more information about STIs and how to practice safer sex you can visit SHOP or go to the following sites:

<http://www.cdc.gov/std/>

<http://www.plannedparenthood.org/>

Sexually Transmitted Infections – Testing Considerations

Disease	Symptoms	Test Options	Other important information ® = Reportable to Public Health Dept
Chlamydia	Most people will have no symptoms. May have change in vaginal discharge or discharge from penis. Chlamydia is the most common sexually transmitted infection in the country. CDC recommends all women under 26 test for chlamydia annually.	Urine test: easy to collect. Vaginal Swab: more accurate, can be self-collected. Rectal Swab: if indicated, can be self-collected. Throat testing for chlamydia is not recommended.	Common infection in young adults. Untreated or repeat infections in women may cause chronic infection and pain, infertility or tubal pregnancy; in men prostatitis or epididymitis. Condoms can reduce risk of transmission. ®
Gonorrhea	Women rarely have symptoms but may have vaginal discharge, pelvic pain, or even fever after several weeks. Men usually have penile discharge and urinary pain within one week of exposure. Can be transmitted from throat and rectum. Throat and rectal infections may be without symptoms. Rectal infection can cause discharge.	Urine Test: can combine with chlamydia test. Rectal Testing: can self-collect this specimen. Throat Testing: available from a triage nurse. Take a “Swab It” card to the reception desk to arrange a nurse or clinician visit for testing.	Less common than chlamydia, and more likely to cause obvious symptoms. Long term complications are similar to above. Use condoms for protection. ®
HIV	Early symptoms of flu-like illness, generalized malaise, and rash are not common. Late symptoms of immune system dysfunction occur years after becoming HIV positive. Using symptoms as a guide to exposure does not work. CDC recommends that everyone between the ages of 13 and 64 get tested for HIV at least once as part of routine health care. For those with specific risk factors, CDC recommends getting tested at least once a year.	Testing for antibodies to the virus may be done by blood or mouth secretions. Blood test is positive 12 to 26 days after exposure. Oral HIV testing becomes accurate in as little as six weeks but is 98% accurate at 12 weeks after an exposure.	Accurate testing requires appropriate waiting between an exposure and testing. If you have significant risk, you will want to test at three weeks and again in three months. To prevent HIV, use condoms. Consider medication for Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis or PREP. For more information about PREP, see a SHOP health educator, a nurse or a clinician. ®
Syphilis	A painless genital sore may appear three to twelve weeks after exposure and may last weeks. After the initial sore, the infection is typically without symptoms or with very vague symptoms like a rash. Untreated syphilis can cause very serious health consequences.	Typical syphilis blood test is not positive when initial genital sore is present. This test is positive two to eight weeks after exposure. For significant risk repeat testing at three months.	Syphilis is on the rise, especially in men having sex with men (MSM). An unusual rash or painless sore should prompt testing. Testing as often as every three to four months may be appropriate depending on your sexual practices. ®
Hepatitis B	May have no symptoms or may experience nausea, jaundice (yellowing of skin or whites of eyes and dark urine), loss of appetite and excessive fatigue. Most college students have been immunized to protect them from Hepatitis B.	Diagnosed with blood testing for the virus and for antibodies to the virus. Testing would be ordered by a clinician after consultation.	Hepatitis B is very contagious. It is spread by blood or sexual fluids. Condoms can be protective. Immunization is available.
Herpes (HSV)	The Herpes Simplex Viruses (HSV) cause blisters and painful ulcers. There are two types: HSV 1 and 2. HSV 1 is much more common and less severe. Symptoms often recur. People can carry this virus without symptoms. The body does not clear this virus. The body develops the ability to manage the virus and as a result outbreaks become less intense and less frequent with time.	Diagnosed by culture taken from a blister or sore. Blood testing for HSV is available but is not recommended. The blood test can give a False Positive result. This means the test was read as positive but there was no virus actually present.	HSV 1 usually occurs around the mouth as cold sores but can cause genital sores. HSV 1 is very common. HSV 2 causes genital sores. It is much less common. HSV can be transmitted by someone who has never noticed sores and sometimes when sores are not present. Medication can treat outbreaks and decrease transmission. Condoms can help reduce transmission.
Genital Warts/ HPV	There are many viruses in the family of Human Papilloma Viruses (HPV). Some HPVs cause warts. Some HPVs can cause cancer on the cervix or rectum. Visible warts should be seen by a clinician. Screening for serious HPVs is done with a Pap smear.	Visual exam by clinician. Pap smear in women starting at age 21. Currently there is no recommendation for anal HPV testing.	There is a vaccination against the most serious types of HPV. We recommend that all adults under age 25 get this vaccination.
Molluscum Contagiosum	This is a viral skin infection spread by close contact. It is found in children and adults. It causes small bumps with a white center which are not painful, irritated or itchy.	Visual exam by clinician. Treatment is removal of the molluscum.	Not technically a sexually transmitted infections but adults spread this with genital to genital contact. May resolve spontaneously. Easy to treat.
Crabs and other Parasites	Small bugs that live on hair follicles and cause itching and irritation. Can be spread by close contact or sharing clothes and bedding.	Visual exam may find egg sacs on hair shafts or sometimes adult lice.	Treatment is with insecticides and scrupulous cleaning of clothes and bedding. Important to treat contacts to fully clear crabs and lice.