



A part of Alfred Health

Melbourne Sexual Health Centre

580 Swanston Street
Carlton Vic 3053
Australia

Tel: (03) 9341 6200

Fax: (03) 9347 2230

Free Call: 1800 032 017

TTY: (03) 9347 8619

Web: www.mshc.org.au

SEXUAL HEALTH

FOR MEN WHO HAVE SEX WITH MEN

At Melbourne Sexual Health Centre we strongly recommend that men who have sex with men consider regular screening for sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

How often and exactly which screening tests you have depends on your particular life circumstances.

If you feel entirely well and have no symptoms of an STI (no discharge from the penis or pain on passing urine) then you may want to have what we call an "asymptomatic screen".

An asymptomatic screen for a man who has sex with men involves testing for chlamydia, gonorrhoea, HIV and syphilis. We test for gonorrhoea in the throat with a throat swab. We test for chlamydia in the penis by collecting a urine sample. We test for both gonorrhoea and chlamydia in the rectum by collecting anal swabs.

We test for HIV, hepatitis B and syphilis by taking a blood test. This test looks for antibodies in the blood that indicate you have been exposed to one of these infections. It is important to know that these antibodies don't show up in the blood straight away. Although in some cases antibodies may be detected soon after infection, it can take up to 6 weeks after someone has been infected with HIV or syphilis before these infection(s) can be detected with a blood test.

Gonorrhoea in the throat or rectum often does not cause any symptoms. Gonorrhoea in the penis does usually cause symptoms such as a discharge from the penis and/or burning and stinging on passing urine. Chlamydia in the penis or rectum does not usually cause any symptoms. Syphilis and HIV often do not cause any symptoms.

One of the main reasons for testing you for infections like chlamydia and gonorrhoea, even if you aren't experiencing any ill effects of these infections, is that infection with chlamydia or gonorrhoea (as well as with syphilis or herpes) can increase your chances of being infected with HIV or of passing HIV on to

somebody else if you already have it.

This is because when you have an STI the body sends lots of immune cells to the area of infection to try to fight it off and these are exactly the cells that are targeted by the HIV virus.

Also, for men living with HIV, being infected with some other STIs seems to make HIV more active.

We recommend that you should consider screening for all or some of these STIs at least once a year. If you have a number of partners and have had unprotected sex (anal or oral sex), then it may be a good idea to have screening tests more frequently.

This fact sheet is designed to provide you with information on Gay Men's Sexual Health. It is not intended to replace the need for a consultation with your doctor. All clients are strongly advised to check with their doctor about any specific questions or concerns they may have. Every effort has been taken to ensure that the information in this pamphlet is correct at the time of printing.