



**MSHC**

MELBOURNE SEXUAL HEALTH CENTRE  
Part of AlfredHealth

# Testing without an Examination

Melbourne Sexual Health Centre is offering women who attend for testing for sex work the option of collecting their own vaginal swab or urine test, without the need for a genital examination.

*You are being offered the option to self-collect the swab or urine test, based on the fact that you have informed us that you do not have any anal/genital symptoms. Symptoms may include lumps, bumps, sores, blisters, rashes, discharge and anything else which is different from your healthy anal/genital areas.*

## Why are we offering this option?

If you have had testing for work in the sex industry at MSHC in the past, you will have had an examination, and understand our processes. If this is your first visit to MSHC the nurse or doctor will explain the process.

## Routine tests for:

- Chlamydia,
- Gono,
- HIV and
- Syphilis

## What does a HIV Inconclusive test result mean?

Occasionally, a result is neither positive nor negative. This is called an inconclusive HIV result. Having an inconclusive test result does not mean you are going to be HIV positive. We will ask you to come in to talk about this result and arrange for another blood test. These results will not be given over the phone. Some sex workers will be asked to stop work if they return an inconclusive result. This decision is made on a case by case basis and whether the result is likely to turn into a HIV Positive result.

## How you will receive your test results?

With your permission, we will SMS your negative HIV result within seven days. If your HIV result is either positive or inconclusive, we will call you and ask you to attend the clinic to discuss your result.

If you decide to opt out of the SMS service, we will call you if there is any problem. We will call with other test results only if you need further treatment or follow up. If you have not heard from us after 7 days, from the day of testing, then we have not identified any problems. We call this no news is good news

We hope that women may feel more comfortable not being examined when there are no symptoms. It may also reduce the time spent at the clinic.

We provide information ensuring that women understand that it is their responsibility under Victorian law not to work when they have symptoms outlined in this information sheet.

## What happens next?

When the nurse or doctor sees you they will,

- Ask some questions about your sexual health
- Collect your throat swab and either collect your blood test in the room or send you to the serology room.
- Give you a bag with your throat swab and a labelled swab, or urine jar, for you to collect yourself in the bathroom. There are instructions on the wall in all of the bathrooms about how to collect a swab.
- You will then place the bagged specimens in the drop box and can leave.

You still need to attend every three months for testing.

## Your Responsibilities

Under current Victorian law a person working in the sex industry is unable to work if they have any sexually transmitted infection (STI) This includes any visible lesions of genital warts or genital herpes. You may return to work when you have no symptoms. Seek advice from a health provider about

treatment options and when you can return to work.

If you have no symptoms such as lumps or bumps, or genital sores then you have the option to either collect the vaginal swab yourself or do a urine test.

### **Do I have to collect the swab myself?**

If you prefer the doctor or nurse collect the vaginal swab for you, then you are welcome to ask them to do this.

### **Other Symptoms or Concerns**

If you have other symptoms such as itching, abnormal vaginal discharge, pain or bleeding then you will require a genital examination and collection of swabs by a doctor or nurse.

The doctor or nurse will continue to collect the throat swab for chlamydia and gonorrhoea. You will still be required to have a blood test for HIV and Syphilis.

### **What happens if I am diagnosed with an STI?**

You should stop sex work when you are informed a test for chlamydia, gonorrhoea, trichomonas or syphilis is positive, and attend for treatment. In most cases you can return to work 7 days after you have taken treatment. Your doctor or nurse will advise you when you can return to work when you attend for treatment.

The Victorian law prohibits people who are HIV Positive from working as a commercial sex worker. HIV Positive means an individual has been infected with the Human Immunodeficiency

Virus (HIV).

### **What if I find genital warts or genital herpes?**

You should stop sex work and seek advice from a health provider about treatment options and when you can return to work.

### **Some Information about HIV Testing**

#### **HIV Test and the Window Period**

A person produces HIV antibodies in their blood after they have been infected with HIV. A very reliable blood test detects these antibodies 6 weeks after possible exposure. This is called the window period. You may need to repeat the test if your risk for HIV less than 6 weeks ago.

#### **What does a HIV Negative test result mean?**

A negative HIV antibody test result means the test did not detect HIV in the blood sample you provided. Remember you may need to repeat the test, if your risk for HIV was less than 6 weeks before the blood test.

#### **What does a HIV Positive test result mean?**

A positive HIV antibody test means that you have HIV. If your test is positive we will provide you with support through our counsellors and HIV service. Remember, we consider your risk of having HIV is extremely low. If you receive a HIV Positive test result then you are required to



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(HIV positive people only)

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