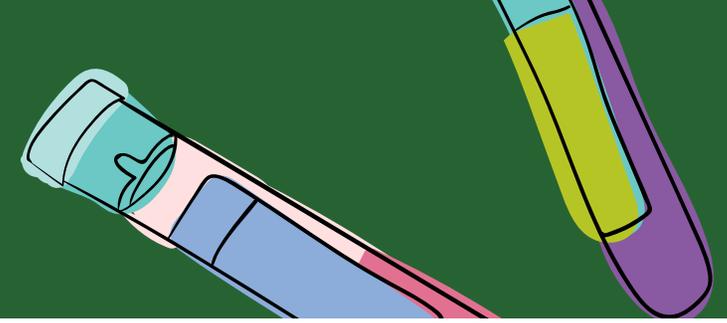


HIV & STI Testing

for All Bodies

MADE
SIMPLE



It can be hard to keep track of everything there is to know about HIV and STIs. Between the different symptoms, different types of treatment, and different prevention methods, it's easy to get confused. Not to mention that so much sexual health information is presented in a binary, gendered way (i.e. testing recommendations for “men” vs. “women”) which, quite frankly, doesn't reflect many of our experiences.

One way to make things simpler and to feel more empowered is to focus on things that are within your control. One of those things is making sure you're getting the HIV and STI testing **you** need for **your** body.

Below, we provide a brief overview of HIV and STI testing, different types of tests available, and which types of tests might be right for you. If there's a test you think you need that you haven't been offered before, speak with your healthcare provider about receiving it the next time you go for testing.

Where should I get checked?

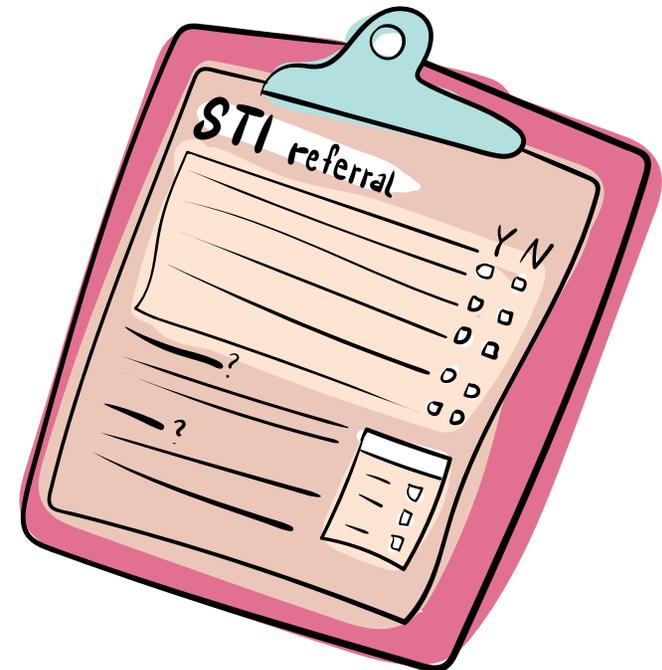
In general, any area that you've had sex (throat, genitals, anus) is somewhere that you should have tested. A brief explanation of types of tests and who should get them is provided below.

How often should I get checked?

- If you're sexually active, the best-case scenario is to get checked after every new sex partner (or at least annually if you only have one sex partner).
- You should get checked every 3-6 months if you're experiencing any of the following: multiple sex partners; inconsistent use of condoms or other barriers; group sex; injection drug use; drug use during sex; exchanging sex for money, shelter, or goods; or are taking HIV treatment or PrEP.
- You should also be tested anytime you get symptoms. These can include:
 - burning when you pee,
 - discharge from the penis or vagina/front hole or anus,
 - abnormal bleeding, cramping, or pelvic pain,
 - sores, bumps, or warts on the genitals, and/or a sore throat.

Please note that HIV and some STIs have what is called a “window period”.

Window periods refer to the amount of time it takes for an STI to show up in a test. During this period, even if you do have HIV or an STI, if you're tested, your result might inaccurately come back negative. Window periods differ from infection to infection, typically running from several days to several weeks. When speaking with your healthcare provider, make sure you share with them the last time you were sexually active. If your last sexual activity was too recent for an accurate test result, your healthcare provider might ask you to return at a later date for follow-up testing.



Test	What is it?	Who should get it?	What can it test for? <i>*NOTE: some of these are standard tests, while some are only offered upon request / presence of symptoms.*</i>
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Bloodwork	Blood is taken from a person's arm using a needle.	Anyone who's had any sexual contact since their last HIV or STI test.
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- Standard**
- HIV
 - Syphilis
 - Hepatitis B (if you haven't been vaccinated)
 - Hepatitis C
- By Request/With Symptoms**
- Hepatitis A

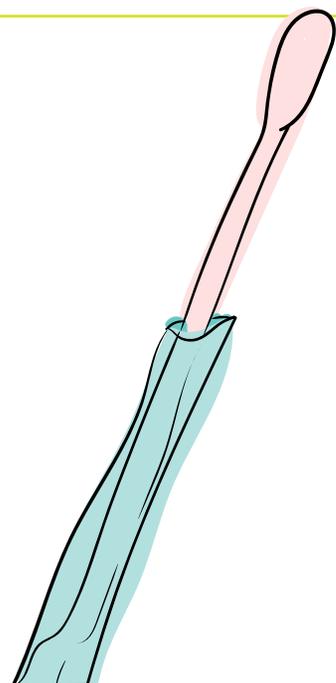
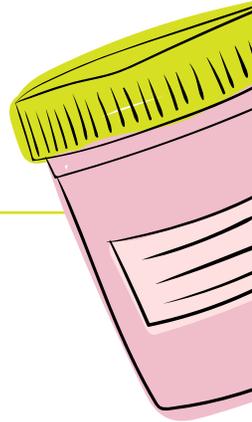
Urine	A person pees into a cup.	Anyone who's had any sexual contact since their last STI test.
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- Standard**
- Chlamydia
 - Gonorrhea
- By Request/With Symptoms**
- Trichomoniasis (Trich)
 - Lymphogranuloma Venereum (LGV)

Note: : In NS, only people with penises are regularly offered urine testing. People with vaginas/front holes are offered genital swabs. If you have a penis and you're experiencing symptoms or have had sex with someone you know had chlamydia or gonorrhea, a healthcare provider may choose to swab your urethra (the tip of your penis).

Genital or Urethra Swab	A swab is gently rubbed against the inside or surface of the genitals, urethra, or lesions (i.e. sores, bumps). Some genital swabs can be taken by yourself in the bathroom, and some must be taken by a doctor/nurse.	Anyone who's had any sexual contact since their last STI test.
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- Standard**
- Chlamydia
 - Gonorrhea
- By Request/With Symptoms**
- Bacterial Vaginosis (BV)
 - Yeast Infection
 - Trich
 - HSV (if lesions are present)
 - LGV



Throat Swab

A swab is gently swiped over the tonsils and the uvula (the “punching bag” in the back of your throat).

Anyone who’s had oral sex since their last STI test. This includes:

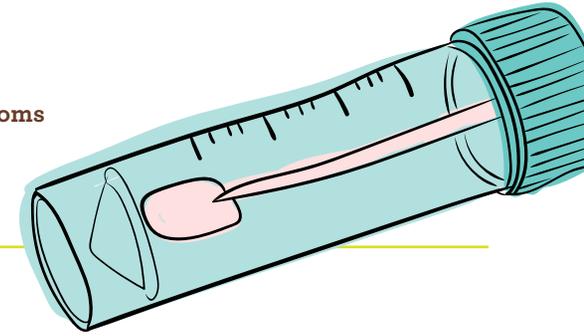
- When something is put inside of your mouth, like a penis or a sex toy (if it’s shared with others)
- If you have “gone down” on someone and licked/sucked on their vulva, perineum, and/or anus

Standard

- Chlamydia
- Gonorrhoea

By Request/With Symptoms

- LGV



Anal Swab

A swab is inserted into the anus and twirled around gently along the inside surface.

Anyone who’s had receptive anal sex since their last test. This means something is put inside your anus, like a penis or a sex toy (if it’s shared with others).

Standard

- Chlamydia
- Gonorrhoea

By Request/With Symptoms

- LGV
- Some individuals, especially those living with HIV, may want to undergo an annual rectal exam with a finger or a pap swab to detect early signs of anal cancer which is often associated with HPV

Cervical Pap

A speculum (a medical device that looks like a duckbill) is used to open the vagina/front hole and a swab is used to collect cells from your cervix.

Anyone with a cervix (every 3 years from the age of 25, unless otherwise directed by a doctor or nurse).

- A cervical pap can detect abnormal cells which could be related to HPV infections and/or cervical cancer. Abnormal cells do not mean you have HPV or cervical cancer.
- Pap tests may also detect bacterial vaginosis, yeast, and Trichomoniasis, but it is not designed to do so. It is best to mention any concerns regarding these infections to your doctor or nurse so they can gather a separate sample for that purpose.

Visual Exam

Your healthcare provider may view your skin, genitals, and/or discharge from a genital area to determine if the symptoms you are experiencing could be a result of an STI.

Anyone who is experiencing symptoms such as sores, bumps, warts, or an uncommon discharge from a genital area that might appear to be associated with an STI.

- Herpes (HSV)
- Genital Warts (HPV)
- Pubic Lice (crabs)
- Scabies
- LGV
- May aid as part of diagnosis of many other infections such as BV, yeast infection, or Trich.

Additional Notes:

- Some STIs can be tested with multiple methods (i.e. urine and swabs). In these cases, if appropriate, your healthcare provider might choose to only use one type of test.
- Some STI tests may include multiple parts of your body (i.e. throat, genitals, and anus). Your healthcare provider will suggest taking samples from more than one part of your body depending on the sex you’re having.

This information was developed in consultation with queer, trans, and two spirit community members, community-based organizations, healthcare providers, and public health professionals. Information is based on the best guidance available and was informed by the Public Health Agency of Canada, Alberta Health, Alberta Health Services, the BC Centre for Disease Control, the Centre of Disease Control (US), and Planned Parenthood (US). Information has been adapted for succinct, accessible delivery to community and is not intended to be exhaustive or be used for clinical guidance.



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