

‘Sexual health is not a matter of personal hygiene! Let’s not use the words “clean” or “dirty”. Most people with STIs do not even know they are infected.’

– Dr Naomi Sutton. The Sex Clinic. E4

Sexual Health Check Facts

It is important to get a sexual health check in each new relationship and definitely before having sex without a condom (remember that condoms are the only form of protection that act as a barrier contraception against STIs).

Anyone can use the sexual health services for a check-up, regardless of age, disability, ethnicity, religion, and whatever their gender and sexual orientation.

It is free to get a sexual health check, see below as to how local clinics can be found.

The only way to know if someone has or has not got any infections is to get tested because STIs can be present without causing symptoms.

Remember that the staff working in these places are very used to dealing with these issues and should be very reassuring. A person’s confidentiality will always be respected unless there are safety worries about their welfare. If someone does get diagnosed with an STI, staff can help to anonymously inform any sexual partners.

Sexual Health Check Myths Busted

Anyone can get an STI at any time.

Some STIs can lie dormant for weeks, months or years without the person knowing anything about it. This is why it is very important not to blame or stigmatise these conditions, because it is often difficult to know who gave what to who, and either way that should not be the focus, because both people who have sex have a responsibility to look after their own sexual health.

Unless there are specific worries or symptoms that might need a closer look, the basic health check is simply a self-taken swab and a blood test for a female and a urine test and blood test for a male.

HIV cannot be transmitted via toilet seats, kissing or cutlery or on other household items. People living with HIV and taking treatment cannot pass HIV on to their sexual partners because the level of the virus in the body is kept so low by the medication it is undetectable on blood tests.

Worried about anything you have seen or discussed today? Try these websites to answer your questions or ask a trusted adult if you are still worried:

Find your local sexual health clinic:

<https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/sexual-health/find-a-sexual-health-clinic>

STIs and the sexual health check:

<https://www.brook.org.uk/your-life/getting-tested-for-stis/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/sexually-transmitted-infections-stis/>

HIV, AIDS and U=U:

<https://www.savinglivesuk.com>