Your common Sexual Health questions answered…

Many people attend our services with similar questions and it is sometimes hard to decipher what information on the internet is accurate. Here are a few questions we get asked commonly which may help you. Although don’t forget if you have any questions we are more than happy to see you in the clinic.

Questions everyone asks us?

Should I get checked out for STIs? My last visit was two years ago how often should I come to see you?

A lot of STIs cause no symptoms, and having a check-up is very straightforward. If you have no symptoms (you have not noticed anything wrong) you can take the sample yourself without need for examination by the Nurse or Doctor. You may be offered a swab from your throat, vagina and or your anus (bottom) depending on what type of sex you have had. We routinely also do blood tests that check for HIV and syphilis. If you have any symptoms we will offer to examine you but the examination should not hurt.

We recommend you come for a check-up if you notice anything wrong. If you are heterosexual and have no concerns come once a year or once every 3 months if you are gay or bisexual.

Could I have a STI from years ago?

It is possible and that is why it is never too late to start having sexual health check-ups. About one in five people with HIV in the UK haven't been diagnosed. Chlamydia often has no symptoms, but it can affect your fertility if left untreated.

Could I be infertile from a previous infection?

Chlamydia and gonorrhoea can both lead to infertility if left untreated which is why we suggest to have regular checks if you are having sex with different people. It is important to remember though that the vast majority of people who have had these infections don't have any permanent problems. There is no way of testing for infertility and we suggest that if you have been unable to conceive after 1 year of trying to see your GP who will be able to help you further.

I had treatment for an infection a few years ago and it hasn't come back. Do I need to tell my new girlfriend about it?

It depends on which STI you had. Some can be completely treated with antibiotics, but others may recur or cause no symptoms.

If my partner has a STI, do I need treatment too?

If you have had sex with someone who is told they have an STI such as Chlamydia or Gonorrhoea you will need treatment too. If you don't get treatment, can pass the infection on to other new sexual partners or back and forward between your regular partner. If your partner was told they had warts or herpes then we would wait until you had symptoms before we offer any treatment or specific tests. If you haven’t had a sexual health check though we would recommend that you just had a routine screen anyway as being exposed to one STI leaves you more open to potentially being exposed to others.
Questions Women often asked us?

I have a change in my vaginal discharge (fluid leaking from my vagina)?

It is important to remember discharge is normal for a woman and may change throughout your cycle. If there is any change in discharge, such as, consistency (thicker or thinner), smell (fishy odour) or colour it is important to have this checked out. It is often nothing serious and related to thrush or bacterial vaginosis but you should have it checked out to exclude other STI’s.

Where can I get the morning after pill from and how soon do I need to get it?

You can get emergency contraception in the form of a pill from the sexual health clinic – or you can also access it from GP surgeries and the Brae Clinic. It will be free at all these places – you can also access the emergency contraceptive pill from your local pharmacist at a small cost if you are over 16.

The sooner you see us the better but you must attend within 5 days of the unprotected sex to be offered any form of emergency contraception. We will discuss with you at the time the best options available to you.

An IUD (copper coil) can also be fitted as emergency contraception and is the most effective method – we will discuss this with you at the time or the Brae clinic would also be able to provide you with this.

Questions men often asked us?

Do I need to wash my penis?

Yes! You should keep your penis clean and healthy like you would do any other part of your body. It doesn’t require any special attention and only requires gently washing with warm water once a day. Too much soap or shower gel can be bad. All you need to do is gently wash your penis when you’re having a shower or bath. If you have a foreskin, pull it back gently and wash underneath. If you don’t wash underneath the foreskin correctly, a cheesy-looking substance called smegma may begin to gather.

Is it normal for my penis to smell fishy and have white bits behind the tip?

This can happen from time to time – especially if you aren’t circumcised and still have a foreskin. To prevent it, wash gently behind the foreskin if you have one. Use warm water and try to wash each day. If you’re washing carefully and the symptoms don’t go away come to see us at the sexual health clinic so we can exclude an STI.

I have small spots on the testicles and some on the penis. Should I be worried?

There are lots of normal hair follicles and glands on the testicles and penis, which all men have, and don’t cause any problems. Some men also have small spots around the head of their penis called pearly penile papules – these are completely normal. You should come to see us on at least one occasion at the sexual health clinic to rule out anything like genital herpes or warts.

I have pain in the end of my penis when urinating – should I be worried?

We would strongly suggest attending the clinic for a sexual health screen. This symptom could be cause by a variety of infections but we definitely need to rule out infections like Chlamydia and Gonorrhea.