

Media Release

The Hon Martin Foley MP

Minister for Health
Minister for Ambulance Services
Minister for Equality



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VICTORIANS URGED TO GET STI CHECK AS WE MOVE TO COVID NORMAL

Victorians are being urged to get tested for sexually transmissible infections (STIs), with new figures showing a concerning drop in STI notifications and testing during the coronavirus pandemic.

This week is STI Testing Week – and as Victoria moves towards COVID Normal it's the perfect time for everyone to consider their sexual health, have a conversation about STIs and get the important health checks they might have put off during the pandemic.

New data from the Melbourne Sexual Health Centre shows a 68 per cent drop in people without symptoms seeking STI testing this year.

There has also been a noticeable reduction in STI notifications in Victoria – down almost 20 per cent between January and September. This is likely due to people delaying health checks during the pandemic.

It's estimated that around one in every six people will contract an STI throughout their lifetime – and most won't even know it. STIs are on the rise due to changing sexual behaviour, persistent stigma, decreasing and inconsistent condom use, migration and social media networking.

As Victoria opens up and our sexual behaviours change, it's important people visit their local health service or GP for a STI test – it's quick, painless and confidential.

People starting a family should also get tested for STIs to prevent passing on a possible syphilis infection. If untreated in women, syphilis can cause miscarriage, serious birth defects and stillbirth.

There has been a 475 per cent increase in infectious syphilis cases in Victoria since 2010 – with eight congenital syphilis cases recorded over the past three years. Tragically, three foetal deaths have also been recorded.

There are many types of STIs and most are curable with the right treatment. However, if left untreated, STIs can cause long-term damage, including infertility.

STI testing is available at a local GP, family planning clinics, Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations, community health services, and specialist sexual health clinics.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Martin Foley

"STIs don't discriminate. Anyone who is sexually active, regardless of their age or background can contract them. That's why as we move towards COVID Normal everyone needs to take the necessary precautions and get tested."

"Many STIs have no signs or symptoms – so if you're sexually active, you should have an STI check once a year."

"We are urging women and their partners to have an STI check before and during pregnancy. This can stop women from passing on the syphilis infection to their babies and prevent complications including tragic stillbirths."

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