

STI Testing at Brown Health Services

Brown Health Services Patient Education Series

Why get tested?

Being tested for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) allows you to take charge of your own health.

There is no single test that will screen for all STIs. Testing for specific STIs is particularly important if you think you have symptoms, or have been exposed to an STI. Sometimes weeks or months need to pass before your body develops antibodies that will show up in a test.

Most tests need to be sent to off-site labs and results will not be available immediately.

It is also recommended that sexually active people receive certain STI screening tests as part of their regular medical care, even if they have no symptoms.

If you test negative, you can continue to protect against future risks. Some people get tested with the idea that if they test negative, they won't need to continue to practice safer sex. This is not true. If you test negative, you still need to protect yourself and your partners.

Should you test positive, there are a variety of resources and treatments that can enhance your physical, emotional and spiritual well being. Early medical intervention will allow you to take measures needed to maintain your health. Many STIs, such as chlamydia, gonorrhea and early syphilis can be cured with antibiotics. HIV treatments can help you to maintain your health and quality of life.

Chlamydia:

How to test: swab of areas of contact- back of the throat (pharyngeal), vagina, rectum. Provider or patient can perform swabs. Testing of urine is available too.

When to test: a week after contact with partner

Gonorrhea:

How to test: swab of areas of contact- back of the throat (pharyngeal), vagina, rectum. Provider or patient can perform swabs. Testing of urine is available too.

When to test: a week after contact with a partner

HIV:

How to test: blood drawn in the lab

When to test: at least 2 weeks after contact

Syphilis:

How to test: blood drawn in the lab

When to test: 1 month after contact.

Herpes:

Genital herpes is one of the most common sexually transmitted infections.

- Routine screening for herpes simplex virus (HSV-1 or HSV-2) is **not** recommended in asymptomatic adolescents and adults.

- If you have blisters or sores, please call for an appointment with a Provider.
- When your Provider examines you, they can order a test to look for herpes.
- Genital herpes is diagnosed most accurately with a culture of lesions as early after onset as possible. As time goes by, it is harder to obtain the virus from sores that are beginning to heal.
- Blood tests are not helpful in diagnosing ongoing or recent herpes; the antibodies which blood tests measure can take 3-4 months to be measurable

Confidentiality of STI test results:

STI tests are confidential. Confidential STI testing means that your test results and any other information you discuss with your medical providers will be a part of your medical record. Information in your medical record at Health Services is not a part of any other University record and cannot be shared with anyone (including parents, professors, deans, friends, or peer counselors) without your written authorization.

All STI testing sites are required by law to report positive results for some STIs to the RI Department of Health. This information is used for statistical purposes, and the RI Department of Health may contact you to help you in seeking any treatments you might need. The RI Department of Health cannot disclose your identifying information, results or even the fact that you have been tested to anyone else including parents, friends, insurance agencies, or school officials.

Does insurance cover STI tests at health services?

If you have insurance sponsored through Brown, Student Health Insurance Plan (SHIP) most STI screening is covered. Correspondence from Brown sponsored insurance is generally directed to you, at your University address, not to your family.

If you have private insurance (not Brown sponsored), insurance policies vary. STI tests may not be covered. Many policies cover testing if STI symptoms are present but may not cover screening tests, like those done as part of a routine GYN visit or when you think you may have been exposed to an STI but have no symptoms. You should also know that private insurance companies sometimes notify the subscriber (often parents) as to what tests are done for covered individuals. Therefore, the subscriber may get a notice (called an Explanation of Benefits or EOB) from the private insurance company that “student X had a Chlamydia test on date X,” though results are generally not reported.

If you are concerned, you can contact your insurance company before you get tested to find out their billing policies. You may be able to request that your insurance company mail any EOBs related to sexual health care services to you at your University address. You would call the number on the back of your health insurance card to request this or to make a general inquiry about their policies.

You can choose to have the lab bill you directly at your University address for STI tests instead of billing insurance, but some tests can be costly. (Chlamydia and Gonorrhea tests can run about \$100 each.)

To schedule STI testing:

Brown Health Services

(401)863-3953, 450 Brook Street, Providence

Testing is available by appointment.
www.brown.edu/health