

Testing for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) is free for all students at MIT Medical.

Appointments for STD testing can be made through your primary care provider by calling 617-253-4481, or, for female students, through the Obstetrics & Gynecology Service (617-253-1315).

Please note that if you are calling for routine, non-emergency testing, there may be a wait of several weeks for an appointment.

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Center for Health Promotion & Wellness

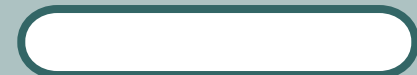


STD Testing at MIT Medical

Information for Students

Center for Health Promotion & Wellness

E23-205 / 617-253-1307



If I make an appointment at MIT Medical, what STDs are usually tested for?

There is no such thing as universal "routine" testing. The decision about what to test for and how often to test depends on each individual's risk for different STDs. Individual risk is related to number of sexual partners, gender of sexual partners, types of sexual behavior engaged in, and whether any symptoms or abnormalities are present on examination, as well as when the most recent sexual contact occurred.

It's a good idea to plan for your testing appointment by getting information about the different kinds of STDs beforehand. You can do this by stopping by the Center for Health Promotion & Wellness on the second floor of Medical from 8:30 am – 5:00 pm weekdays. You can also make an appointment with MIT Medical's sexuality educator, Laura Stuart, to get more in-depth answers to your questions. Laura can be reached by e-mail (stua@med.mit.edu) or phone (617-253-1307).

Websites that provide information about STDs include:

American Social Health Association
<http://www.ashastd.org/>
Planned Parenthood
<http://www.plannedparenthood.org/sti/>
Go Ask Alice, <http://www.goaskalice.com/>

By getting information about STDs and testing beforehand, you are able to have a more informed discussion with your health care provider and advocate knowledgeably for tests that you think you might need.

Is STD testing done during routine physicals or OB/GYN exams?

STD testing is not automatically done, even if you are having a genital exam, a pelvic exam, or a rectal exam. If a patient has particular concerns or specifically wants STD testing, then the patient must specifically ask for it.

What kinds of tests will be performed?

Depending on which STDs are being screened for, you could be asked to give a urine sample, to have a small amount of blood drawn, or to have a genital exam. Swabs and cultures of the vagina, cervix (opening to the uterus), urethra, anus, or mouth and throat may also be performed.

How long will I have to wait for the results of my tests?

Depending on the type of tests performed, results will be available from 1 day to 2 weeks after your appointment.

Will my parents be able to find out that I had STD tests done? Will the tests show up on my insurance statement?

A visit for STD testing is covered under the Student Medical Plan, which all registered students receive. Therefore, your parents' insurance is not involved, and no information about the visit or the tests are sent to them. In addition, your medical records at MIT are protected by strong confidentiality laws, and your parents can not get a copy of them without your written permission.

If you get prescription medication during your visit, a "pharmacy charge" statement may be generated on your bursar bill (if you charge the cost of the drug or your co-payment) or on your parents' insurance statement (if you do not have the MIT Student Extended Insurance Plan). The amount of information about the specific medication purchased depends on your parents' insurance plan. If you wish to avoid any mention of a pharmacy charge, you may pay the full cost of the medication yourself in cash — the pharmacy can give you information about the current prices of specific drugs.

How often should I be tested for STDs?

The frequency of STD testing depends on an individual's number of sexual partners (especially new partners), types of sexual behavior engaged in, and the risk factors described above. A sexually active person who has several new partners per year may want to be tested at least once per year. Talk with your health care provider about an appropriate schedule of routine testing.

What factors should I consider when deciding whether to get tested for STDs? STDs can be transmitted in two ways:

- through mucous membranes in the vagina, penis, rectum or mouth coming into contact with infectious body fluids, such as semen, vaginal fluid, and blood
- through skin-to-skin contact with sores or lesions. Skin-to-skin contact can include genital-genital contact, oral-genital contact, or hand-genital contact

Modes of transmission vary for different STDs. STDs that are transmitted through skin-to-skin contact may be transmitted without penetrative intercourse, and condoms provide only partial protection (although they are certainly much better than not using condoms!). You might want to be tested for STDs if you:

- had sexual intercourse (vaginal, oral, or anal) without a condom
- learned that a partner was not monogamous
- have been sexually assaulted
- had a condom break
- had multiple sexual partners
- learned that a past or current partner has an STD
- discovered that a partner has been exposed to an STD

The number of partners, how "safe" you have been, whether you've been vaccinated for hepatitis B, what part of your body has been involved in sex as well as the gender of your partner(s) should all be considered.