



Your guide to the

# **Standards for the management of sexually transmitted infections (STIs)**

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## *Why do we need standards for the management of STIs?*

To make sure that everyone who needs help or advice about sexually transmitted infections (STIs) gets a high quality service wherever they choose to go.

## *What are the standards?*

The standards are mainly a guide for staff who provide STI services in:

- ✓ sexual health clinics
- ✓ Genitourinary Medicine (GUM) clinics
- ✓ contraception clinics
- ✓ GP practices
- ✓ pharmacies
- ✓ clinics run by the voluntary or independent sector

The standards describe what services they should provide and how they should work. There is also information for NHS commissioners (the people who purchase these services on your behalf).

Importantly, the standards also identify the things that people who use services for help and advice on STIs are entitled to expect. This leaflet tells you how the standards will affect the services you use.

## *Which parts of the standards are relevant for me?*

All of them. There is a summary on the next page.

## *Who is responsible for making sure the standards are followed?*

Commissioners are responsible for purchasing high quality services. Service providers are responsible for delivering high quality and effective care. Commissioners and service providers share responsibility for ensuring the standards are used.

If you believe the care you have received is less good than the standards outlined in this leaflet, you should follow the complaints procedure of the service that provided your care.

## *Who produced the standards?*

The standards were written by the Medical Foundation for AIDS & Sexual Health (MedFASH) for the British Association for Sexual Health and HIV (BASHH). This is the professional organisation of doctors, nurses, sexual health advisers and other professionals who provide specialist sexual healthcare.

## *Where can I get a copy of the standards?*

You can download a free copy of *Standards for the management of sexually transmitted infections (STIs)* from the MedFASH and BASHH websites at:

**[www.medfash.org.uk](http://www.medfash.org.uk)**

**[www.bashh.org](http://www.bashh.org)**

If you do not have internet access, you could ask for a copy from your local Genitourinary Medicine (GUM) or sexual health clinic.

### **Standard 1: Principles of STI care**

- You can go to any sexual health service in your area.
- All services are confidential. (This means not sharing personal information about you or why you are there with anyone else.)
- All STI services are 'open access', meaning you can use the service without needing to see your GP first.
- Any STI service should offer you an appointment to be seen within 48 hours of contacting them.
- If you need treatment for an STI this should be free of prescription charges. If the service you attend is unable to offer free treatment, they should give you the option of referral to a service that can provide treatment free of charge.

### **Standard 2: Appropriately trained staff**

- Your sexual healthcare should be provided by staff with the training to do so. Many different healthcare workers and other staff (eg youth workers or receptionists) may be involved in your care.

### **Standard 3: Clinical assessment**

- When you use an STI service you will be asked about your medical and sexual history and this will include questions about sexual behaviour.
- If you have symptoms you should expect to be offered a genital examination.
- As a minimum, an STI check (or 'screen') should include tests for chlamydia, gonorrhoea, syphilis and HIV. This may involve urine testing, swab tests and blood tests. You should be told which infections you have been tested for.

### **Standard 4: Diagnostics**

- If you are being tested for STIs the most accurate diagnostic tests should be used.

### **Standard 5: Clinical management**

- If you go for STI testing you should receive sexual health advice and information in a sensitive and non-judgemental way and be offered free condoms.
- Ideally, you should get your test results, negative or positive, within 14 working days of having the tests taken. The service should agree with you how you will receive the results.
- If you are diagnosed with an STI you should receive the best available treatment.
- If you are diagnosed with an STI your recent sexual partner(s) will also need an STI test and treatment. The service should offer you help in letting them know. This is called partner notification.

### **Standard 6: Information governance**

- You should be told about how the STI service uses any information it collects about you and the safeguards that are in place to make sure this remains confidential.

### **Standard 7: Links to other services**

- If you need to be referred to another service this should happen as easily and quickly as possible.

### **Standard 8: Clinical governance**

- You should receive care from high quality STI services that are safe, well managed and accountable.

### **Standard 9: Patient and public engagement**

- It is possible for you to provide feedback, good or bad, about STI services. Your views and comments can be used to plan how services are delivered and developed.

## Standards for the management of sexually transmitted infections (STIs)

### *What do they mean for me?*

#### **You should expect:**

- ✓ to be offered an appointment to be seen within 48 hours of contacting an STI service
- ✓ to have your care managed by trained and competent staff
- ✓ to receive confidential, non-judgemental advice
- ✓ to be offered, as a minimum, tests for chlamydia, gonorrhoea, HIV and syphilis
- ✓ to have the most accurate tests for the infections you are being checked for
- ✓ to receive your results, negative or positive, within 14 working days
- ✓ to be given the most effective treatment free of charge\* if any infections are found
- ✓ to be referred to another service quickly and easily, if necessary
- ✓ to be offered free condoms
- ✓ to be able to give feedback, good or bad, about STI services
- ✓ to receive your care from high quality STI services that are safe, well-managed and accountable

\* If the service you attend is unable to offer free treatment, they should offer you the option of referral to a service that can provide treatment free of charge.

Many organisations were involved in the development of the standards. Thank you to all of them, and especially to those who helped write this leaflet: fpa, National Union of Students, Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists Consumers' Forum and Terrence Higgins Trust.

Medical Foundation for AIDS & Sexual Health (MedFASH)  
www.medfash.org.uk  
Registered charity no: 296689

British Association for Sexual Health and HIV (BASHH)  
www.bashh.org  
Registered charity number: 1099301