



LGBTQ+ Sexual Health Guide



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Your Safety-First Resource for Informed Decisions in Australia

Comprehensive, medically-accurate information to protect your health and wellbeing

WHY THIS GUIDE MATTERS

LGBTQ+ individuals in Australia face unique health challenges and often receive inadequate sexual health education. Sexual health knowledge among international students in Australia is lower than domestic students, and comprehensive LGBTQ+-inclusive education remains limited. This guide provides the essential information you need to make informed decisions about your sexual health.

The Australian Statistics That Matter:

- In 2020, more than 29,000 Australians were living with HIV – there was an 18% drop of HIV notifications since 2015
 - In 2020, there were about 57,500 new cases of notifiable STI among females and 67,400 among males
 - Over the past 10 years, Australian diagnoses of gonorrhoea have doubled, while diagnoses of syphilis have tripled
 - Most gonorrhoea diagnoses are among gay and bisexual men
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UNDERSTANDING YOUR RISKS IN AUSTRALIA

Key Health Disparities

There continue to be high rates of chlamydia, gonorrhoea and syphilis diagnosed among gay and bisexual men living in major cities. Research shows significant disparities across different LGBTQ+ populations, with most diagnoses (71 per cent) were among males for gonorrhoea.

Why LGBTQ+ People Face Higher Risks

- **Limited inclusive education:** Most sexual health programs assume heterosexual and cisgender participants
- **Healthcare discrimination:** Many LGBTQ+ people report poor treatment or feeling uncomfortable discussing sexual health with providers
- **Structural barriers:** Stigma, discrimination, and limited access to LGBTQ+-affirming healthcare services

Testing Decline Concerns

Based on Medicare testing data, between 2019 and 2021, the number of people aged 15 to 24 years getting a chlamydia or gonorrhoea test declined by 14% in Australia, highlighting the importance of regular testing.

ESSENTIAL SAFER SEX PRACTICES

Universal Protection Strategies

Barrier Methods

- **Condoms (External/Internal):** Use latex or polyurethane condoms for penetrative sex
- **Dental Dams:** Essential for oral contact with vulva or anus
- **Gloves:** For digital contact, especially with cuts or hangnails
- **Fresh barriers:** Never reuse; change between different types of contact

Communication & Consent

- **Before intimacy:** Discuss STI testing history, boundaries, and protection preferences
- **Ongoing consent:** Check in throughout sexual activity
- **Disclosure:** Share your STI status honestly and expect the same
- **Respect boundaries:** "No" means no, always

Population-Specific Considerations

Men Who Have Sex With Men (MSM)

Current guidelines advise Men who have Sex with Men to have a sexual health check every 3 months. Key prevention strategies:

- **Frequent testing:** Every 3 months for comprehensive STI screening
- **PrEP consideration:** Pre-exposure prophylaxis available through Australian healthcare providers
- **Condom use:** Especially important for anal sex, which carries higher transmission risks
- **Comprehensive screening:** Including throat and rectal testing

Women Who Have Sex With Women (WSW)

- **Don't skip protection:** STIs can transmit through shared sex toys, oral contact, and genital-to-genital contact
- **Clean sex toys:** Wash thoroughly or use fresh condoms on toys between partners
- **Regular screening:** Including HPV/cervical cancer screening
- **Dental dams:** Essential for oral contact

Transgender and Non-Binary Individuals

- **Anatomy-based risk assessment:** Consider specific anatomy and sexual practices

- **Hormone considerations:** Discuss how hormone therapy might affect sexual health with providers
 - **Surgery considerations:** Post-surgical care and adapted safer sex practices
 - **Affirming healthcare:** Seek providers experienced with transgender health
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HIV PREVENTION IN AUSTRALIA

Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP)

Australia has excellent PrEP access through the healthcare system. Australia, one of the earliest countries to provide PrEP nationally and at scale, has comprehensive programs available.

PrEP Effectiveness:

- 99% effective at preventing HIV when taken consistently
- Available through GPs and sexual health clinics
- Covered by Medicare with specialist prescription
- Requires regular monitoring by healthcare provider

Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP)

- Emergency medication started within 72 hours of potential HIV exposure
- Must be continued for 28 days
- Available at emergency departments and sexual health clinics
- Most effective when started within 36 hours

Treatment as Prevention

People with undetectable viral loads cannot transmit HIV sexually (U=U: Undetectable = Untransmittable). Australia has excellent HIV treatment services through Medicare.

TESTING & SCREENING IN AUSTRALIA

How Often to Get Tested

General Guidelines:

- **Sexually active individuals:** Annually minimum
- **Higher risk groups:** Every 3-6 months
- **MSM:** Current guidelines advise Men who have Sex with Men to have a sexual health check every 3 months
- **New relationships:** Before unprotected sex
- **Multiple partners:** Every 3 months

What's Tested

- **Blood tests:** HIV, syphilis, hepatitis B & C
- **Urine tests:** Chlamydia, gonorrhoea
- **Swab tests:** Throat, rectal, genital areas for various STIs
- **Physical examination:** For symptoms or routine screening

Where to Get Tested in Queensland

Brisbane LGBTQ+-Specific Services:

- **RAPID (Fortitude Valley):** Free RAPID HIV & STI testing. We can test for HIV, syphilis, chlamydia, and gonorrhoea at our clinic in Fortitude Valley, Brisbane
- **Stonewall Medical Centre:** Bulk billed for those who present a current Commonwealth Concession Card
- **Clinic 30 (Queensland Council for LGBTI Health):** Comprehensive LGBTQ+ healthcare services
- **Testing Point @ Clinic 30:** Walk-in service Tuesdays 6-8pm

General Sexual Health Services:

- **Your local GP:** Many offer bulk billing and sexual health services

- **Queensland Health sexual health clinics:** Located throughout the state
- **Community health centres:** Often provide free or low-cost services

Cost and Medicare

If you're getting an STI test, some GPs will bulk bill, meaning if you have a Medicare card, you won't pay. Many clinics also offer low-cost and sometimes free testing for young people.

Important Privacy Information: STI test results won't show on your Medicare records, ensuring your privacy is protected.

VACCINATION RECOMMENDATIONS

HPV Vaccine

Australia has one of the world's most successful HPV vaccination programs. The proportion of non-Indigenous females aged under 21 years attending sexual health clinics diagnosed with genital warts, which are caused by HPV, has decreased from 10.6 per cent in 2007 to 0.2 per cent in 2022.

Hepatitis A & B Vaccines

- Especially important for MSM and people with multiple partners
- Available through GPs and sexual health clinics
- Often covered by Medicare

Mpox (Monkeypox) Vaccine

Mpox cases in Australia have risen by 570 per cent since July 2024 as vaccination rates remain low. Queensland has seen 109 cases since the start of the year. Vaccination is available at specialist clinics like Stonewall Medical Centre.

FINDING LGBTQ+-AFFIRMING HEALTHCARE IN AUSTRALIA

What to Look For

- **Inclusive language:** Providers who use appropriate terminology
- **Experience:** Knowledge about LGBTQ+ health needs
- **Non-discrimination policies:** Explicitly protecting LGBTQ+ patients
- **Confidentiality:** Understanding of privacy concerns

Queensland-Specific LGBTQ+ Health Services

- **Queensland Council for LGBTI Health:** QCGP+ is an inclusive chosen families general practice run by the Queensland Council for LGBTI Health (QC) based in Brisbane
- **Stonewall Medical Centre:** Proudly servicing the general health and sexual health of Brisbane's lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer / questioning (LGBTQIA+), sex workers and the straight / heterosexual community since 1995

Questions to Ask Providers

- "What experience do you have treating LGBTQ+ patients?"
 - "Are you familiar with PrEP and other prevention strategies?"
 - "How do you ensure patient confidentiality?"
 - "What pronouns should I use for you, and how would you like me to refer to my anatomy?"
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SUBSTANCE USE & SEXUAL HEALTH

Risk Factors

- **Impaired judgment:** Increased likelihood of risky sexual behavior
- **Injection drug use:** High risk for HIV and hepatitis transmission
- **Chemsex:** Combining sex with recreational drugs increases risks

Harm Reduction Strategies

- **Plan ahead:** Decide on safer sex boundaries before using substances
 - **Avoid sharing:** Never share needles, pipes, or straws
 - **Stay hydrated:** Especially with stimulants
 - **Have sober support:** Someone who can help with safety decisions
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MENTAL HEALTH & SEXUAL WELLBEING

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer/questioning, asexual and other sexually or gender diverse (LGBTIQ+)
Australians have higher rates of mental illness and distress than their peers. This is often due to stigma, discrimination and abuse.

Connection Between Mental & Sexual Health

- Depression and anxiety can affect sexual desire and satisfaction
- Sexual trauma may impact future sexual experiences
- Substance use often correlates with both mental health issues and risky sexual behavior

Australian Support Resources

- **Lifeline:** 13 11 14 (24/7 crisis support)
 - **QLife:** 1800 184 527 - anonymous and free LGBTIQ+ peer support and referral for people in Australia wanting to talk about sexuality, gender, bodies, feelings or relationships
 - **Beyond Blue:** 1300 22 4636 (depression and anxiety support)
 - **Kids Helpline:** 1800 55 1800 (for under 25s)
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SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

For Young People

- **Confidentiality:** If you're 14 or older Medicare won't disclose your medical information to your parents without your consent
- **Free services:** Many GP clinics offer low cost and sometimes free testing for young people
- **Queensland youth support:** Our Diverse City is a life skills program for young people aged 12 to 25 who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, questioning, asexual, pansexual or any other expression of diverse genders and/or sexualities

For International Students

STI knowledge was significantly lower for international than domestic Australian-born students. Many services offer support for international students, and some provide free care even without Medicare.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People

Rates of infection for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (First Nations) people are higher than those for non-Indigenous

Australians. Culturally appropriate services are available through community health centres.

EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

When to Seek Immediate Care

- **Potential HIV exposure:** Get PEP within 72 hours
- **Sexual assault:** Emergency medical care and evidence collection
- **Severe symptoms:** Sudden onset of fever, severe pain, or unusual discharge
- **Allergic reactions:** To medications or latex products

Australian Emergency Resources

- **Emergency services:** 000
 - **1800RESPECT:** 1800RESPECT is a confidential information, counselling and support service. It is available for free, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to support people impacted by domestic, family or sexual violence
 - **13 HEALTH:** 13 43 25 (Queensland health advice line)
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MAINTAINING SEXUAL WELLNESS

Regular Self-Care

- **Know your body:** Regular self-examination for changes
- **Communication:** Open dialogue with partners about needs and boundaries
- **Education:** Stay informed about new prevention methods and treatments
- **Support networks:** Maintain connections with affirming friends and healthcare providers

Pleasure & Safety Together

Sexual health isn't just about avoiding disease—it's about enjoying fulfilling, consensual experiences. Safety measures enhance rather than detract from pleasure by:

- Building trust between partners
 - Reducing anxiety about health risks
 - Ensuring everyone feels respected and cared for
 - Creating space for open communication
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TRUSTED AUSTRALIAN RESOURCES

National Health Organizations

- **Australian Government Department of Health:**
health.gov.au
- **Sexual Health Australia:** shq.org.au
- **Kirby Institute:** kirby.unsw.edu.au
- **Australian STI Management Guidelines:**
sti.guidelines.org.au

LGBTQ+-Specific Australian Resources

- **Queensland Council for LGBTI Health:** qc.org.au
- **ACON:** acon.org.au
- **TransHub:** transhub.org.au
- **LGBTIQ+ Health Australia:** lgbtiqhealth.org.au

Brisbane/Queensland Testing Services

- **RAPID Brisbane:** rapid.org.au
- **Stonewall Medical Centre:** stonewall.com.au
- **Queensland Health Sexual Health Services:**
health.qld.gov.au
- **Stop the Rise (Queensland):**
stoptherise.initiatives.qld.gov.au

Crisis Support

- **Lifeline:** 13 11 14
- **QLife:** 1800 184 527
- **Beyond Blue:** 1300 22 4636
- **1800RESPECT:** 1800 737 732
- **Kids Helpline:** 1800 55 1800

Queensland Youth Support

- **Our Diverse City:** Contact local community centres
 - **PFLAG Brisbane:** 0400 767 832
 - **Headspace:** headspace.org.au (12-25 years)
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FINAL REMINDERS

✓ **Knowledge is power:** The more you know, the better decisions you can make

Regular testing: Make it part of your routine healthcare

Medicare covers most: Testing and treatment are often bulk billed or low-cost

Privacy protected: STI results don't appear on Medicare records

Seek affirming care: You deserve respectful, knowledgeable healthcare

✓ **Support others:** Share accurate information and reduce stigma

Remember: Your Health, Your Choice, Your Right

Every person deserves access to comprehensive, non-judgmental sexual health information and care. Australia has excellent healthcare services available, many specifically designed for LGBTQ+ communities. By taking charge of your sexual health, you're not only protecting yourself but contributing to the wellbeing of our entire community.

Stay safe, stay informed, and remember that seeking sexual health care is a sign of responsibility and self-respect.

This guide provides general health information and should not replace consultation with qualified healthcare providers. Always consult with medical professionals for personalized advice and treatment.

Last updated: June 2025 | **Sources:** Australian Government Department of Health, Kirby Institute, Queensland Health, Queensland Council for LGBTI Health, peer-reviewed Australian medical literature