

INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

Tests offered in

Please read this leaflet carefully

This leaflet gives some information about the tests available in our sexual health clinics. It is recommended that you have all the routine tests mentioned in this leaflet, as there are some infections which can be present without causing any symptoms. If left untreated, these may cause serious health problems and may be transmitted to sexual partners.

We will keep all personal information confidential.

The routine tests offered are:

- **Chlamydia** - a bacterial infection which can be treated with antibiotics. In women, if it is not treated, it can lead to difficulties in getting pregnant. This is a urine test in men and a swab test in women.
- **Gonorrhoea** - a bacterial infection which can be treated with antibiotics. In women, if it is not treated, it can lead to difficulties in getting pregnant. This is a urine or swab test in men depending on symptoms, and a swab test in women.
- **Syphilis** - an uncommon and yet treatable bacterial infection. This is a blood test.
- **HIV** - a viral infection. It is less common than many of the other infections. It can be found in people who feel fit and well as symptoms can take years to develop. This is a blood test.

Extra tests for those with symptoms

Genital examination may detect the viral infections of **genital warts** and **herpes simplex** ulcers.

For women we can also check, where indicated, for:

- **Thrush** - a commonly found yeast infection.
- **Bacterial vaginosis** - a common vaginal condition that occurs when the normal balance in the vaginal bacteria is lost.
- **Trichomoniasis** - a vaginal infection which is sexually transmitted and may cause a discharge, soreness, or no symptoms at all.

A **pelvic examination** (sometimes called an 'internal') may sometimes be offered to women to check the womb and ovaries for evidence of pelvic inflammatory disease or other abnormalities.

A visual check is done to look for any other problems in the genital area, outside and inside the vagina.

For men we can also check, where indicated, for:

- **Non-gonococcal urethritis** (or NGU) - an inflammation of the urethra (water pipe) in men. This can be caused by several types of infection.

A **testicular examination** is performed to check for abnormalities.

A visual check is done to look for any other problems in the genital area.

Transgender people

For those of you who are gender variant, the screen and examination will be discussed with you to decide on the most appropriate.

Other tests

Tests for other infections such as herpes (viral infection) and hepatitis B and C (viral infections affecting the liver) will be done if necessary.

Results

Often, we can tell straight away if you have an infection and treat you accordingly.

For the tests sent to the laboratory, the results may take up to ten working days to come back.

Should any of your laboratory test results show you have an infection or other problem which requires treatment or investigation, **we will contact you to discuss this.**

Reception will give you details for the results telephone line, which you can use to confirm negative tests. We routinely ask you to telephone for your results. We will inform you how to do this.

HIV testing

Please read the following details to ensure you understand the facts about this test.

Why have an HIV test?

You may have HIV infection even if you have no symptoms. Treatments are available for people with HIV infection. These treatments are very effective if given before serious symptoms develop.

Only by knowing that you are infected do you have a choice of using these treatments before you get ill. These treatments have been shown to dramatically reduce the risk of serious illness and early death from AIDS. They can also reduce the risk of an HIV-positive pregnant woman passing the infection to her baby.

What if I am found to have HIV infection?

If a test shows you have HIV infection, you will be offered care, support, and treatment when you get the result. Whether or not you should start treatment will also be discussed.

How long does it take before the infection will show up in my blood sample?

The HIV test used is a '4th generation test'. This detects the majority of infections within 45 days (6 weeks) of a risk exposure. Where testing is done within this time frame, a second test at 3 months from risk exposure is recommended as this will cover the delay in both the HIV and syphilis tests becoming positive.

How is HIV transmitted?

HIV can be passed on in a number of ways:

- Through contact with infected bodily fluids such as blood, semen, and vaginal secretions. This may occur during oral, vaginal, or anal sex.
- Sharing needles, syringes or equipment for drugs, tattoos, and body piercing.
- Through a blood transfusion, especially with unscreened blood from abroad.
- Infected pregnant women may also pass it on to their babies, either while in the womb or through breastfeeding.

Do I need an HIV test if my partner has had one?

Your sexual partner's HIV result may not be the same as your own, so it is important to have the test yourself.

Will it affect my chance of getting life insurance?

Doctors do not need to report negative HIV tests when writing insurance reports.

Insurance companies should no longer ask whether you have had an HIV test, but only enquire whether or not you are HIV positive. This was agreed by the Association of British Insurers in 1994.

People who know they are infected with HIV can have difficulty obtaining new life insurance. A HIV-positive status can also affect a person's ability to obtain certain types of mortgages. This is the same for many other long-term illnesses.

What are the drawbacks of having this test?

If your results show you have HIV, the benefits of knowing this result usually outweigh any drawbacks. These drawbacks may include worries about relationships with family and friends.

Travel to some countries is currently restricted for people who know they have HIV, and there may be employment issues with some people.

When will I get the result?

Results will usually be back in a week. We will discuss with you how to get these results.

What does the test involve?

The nurse/clinical support worker will take a sample of blood, usually just 10ml. Taking a blood sample is a simple routine procedure and usually does not take very long. If the test is positive on this sample, a second test will be required to confirm the result.

Syphilis

Syphilis can be tested for in the same blood sample taken for the HIV test. Modern tests will pick up many cases of infection within a few weeks of exposure. We recommend a follow-up test at three months after risk exposure. Finding the infection early is important for prompt treatment.

If you require more information, please talk to the doctor, nurse, or health adviser.

Further information, including online booking for our mini-sexual health screen (MiSSTI) and for cancellations can be accessed via our website:

<http://www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk/index.php/my-sexual-health>



Further sources of information

NHS Choices: www.nhs.uk/conditions

Trust website: www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk

Patient Experience Team (PET)

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns, or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

King's Mill Hospital: 01623 672222

Newark Hospital: 01636 685692

Email: sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net.

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant health professional would give you.

External websites may be referred to in specific cases. Any external websites are provided for your information and convenience. We cannot accept responsibility for the information found on them.

If you require a full list of references for this leaflet (if relevant) please email sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net or telephone 01623 622515, extension 6927.

Leaflet code: PIL202209-04-TO
Created: June 2015 / Revised: September 2022 /
Review date: September 2024