

Sexual Health Key Messages

- **Condoms** are the only way to protect yourself from both STIs and unplanned pregnancy. They are safe and effective. **Dental dams** can also be used to reduce the risk of STIs by providing a barrier between the mouth and/or genital areas during sex.
- **Sexually transmitted infections (STIs)** are spread through unprotected sex and usually don't have symptoms. STIs can have a range of serious impacts on our health and the health of our partners. An STI test can detect STIs early, enabling early treatment and prevention of complications like infertility and chronic pain.
- **STI testing is a simple, confidential, and essential** way to protect your health and the health of your partners. It is also free at some sexual health clinics. You should get tested every 6-12 months, or whenever you change partners.
- **Affirmative consent** means that all participants in sexual activity freely, actively and enthusiastically agree. This is important to ensure everyone feels safe, respected, and comfortable.
- In Victoria, the **legal age of consent is 16 years**. (Note: for people aged 12 – 15 years, sex with someone within 24-months-of-age of them is NOT a crime.) The legal definition of 'sex' isn't just about penetration. It also includes oral sex, anal sex and sexual touching. Always check that the person you want to have sex with is sober and is comfortable with the decision to have sex.
- In Victoria, all adults must report to Victoria Police if they form a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under 16 years of age. **Failure to disclose** this information is a criminal offence, punishable by imprisonment.
- Pharmacies can be convenient, discreet and trustworthy source of sexual healthcare. **Pharmacists can provide emergency contraception**, condoms, and lubricants, and guide you to other healthcare services. Note: not all pharmacies provide emergency contraception. You can find nearby pharmacies that do provide emergency contraception using the [1800 My Options](#) website or by calling 1800 My Options - 1800 696 784.
- **Contraception** ('birth control' / 'family planning') is a method, medication or device used to prevent pregnancy. There are many types of contraception and each works in a different way. You have the right to choose the type of contraception that is best for you. Remember, no method of contraception is 100% effective and condoms are the only way to protect against STIs.
- **Emergency contraception** ('the morning-after pill' / 'Plan B') is a safe and effective way to prevent pregnancy after unprotected sex or if a condom breaks. It works best when taken as soon as possible, ideally within 72 hours, but some options can work up to 5 days later. Emergency contraception is available without a prescription from pharmacies that choose to carry it.
- **There is no shame in seeking sexual or reproductive health care** – it's a responsible, empowering step toward protecting your health and wellbeing. Sexual health is just as important as any other aspect of your health, and asking for help or getting tested shows strength, self-respect, and care for yourself and others.
- **Image based abuse is never OK. It's a crime.** Sharing, or threatening to share an intimate photo or video of someone without their consent is abuse and can cause serious harm and distress. It's never ok to share an intimate photo or video of someone without their consent. If someone shares an intimate photo or video of you, you can get judgment free help and support from trusted adults, and online resources like the eSafety Commissioner website.
- **It is always illegal to share an intimate photo or video of anyone under 18**, this includes sharing intimate photos or videos of yourself if you were under 18 when they were created.
- **Sexuality** is deeply personal. Everyone has the right to explore and express their sexuality safely and without judgment.
- **Talking about sexual health can be difficult for some people.** It makes some people feel awkward or shy, and that's OK. But, talking about it is important because sexual health is an important part of human health. Sex is normal and we want to make sure that it is **safe and healthy** for everyone.