

what you need to know to stay safe

HIV and other infections can affect all people, no matter where they come from. The more you know about these infections, the more you can protect yourself and other people as well.



more information

The **Multicultural Health and Support Service (MHSS)** is a **free and confidential service** for people from migrant and refugee backgrounds.

We can help by:

- answering any questions you may have
- going with you to get tested for infections
- helping you to access health services
- assisting you and your family to remain safe and healthy

Our community workers can talk to you over the phone or meet you in person. You can speak to a male or female worker, whichever you choose.

Call us or visit our website for more information.

multicultural health and support service
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www.ceh.org.au/mhss.aspx

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ENGLISH



be informed
be safe
be healthy

HIV | Hepatitis | STI



multicultural health
& support service

what is HIV/AIDS?

Everyone has an immune system to keep them healthy and fight germs. The **Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)** attacks the immune system. **Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS)** is a collection of illnesses that happen when the immune system is weakened by HIV.

HIV passes from one person to another through body fluids and blood. Some ways that people can get HIV are from:

- having unprotected sex (sex without a condom)
- sharing needles when injecting drugs
- mothers to children during childbirth or breastfeeding

You cannot get HIV through kissing, mosquito bites or sharing cutlery or food.

what is hepatitis?

Hepatitis is a virus that can damage the liver. There are different types of hepatitis, but they can all cause serious illness if they are not treated.

Hepatitis A is spread through contaminated food or water.

Hepatitis B is spread through sex, infected blood or from mother to child during childbirth.

Hepatitis C is spread through infected blood, for example by sharing drug-injecting needles, razor blades, toothbrushes or tattooing and piercing equipment.

You can get vaccinated against hepatitis A and B, but there is no vaccination for hepatitis C.

what are sexually transmissible infections?

Sexually transmissible infections (STI) are passed from one person to another during sexual intercourse, oral sex or sometimes through contact with genitals. If they are not treated, they can cause irritation and pain and make it difficult for men and women to have children.

Signs of STI include:

- sores, blisters or irritation in the genital area
- unusual discharge from the penis or vagina
- pain in the lower belly or testicles (men)
- abnormal pain or bleeding after sex (women)

Sometimes a person can have an STI but show no signs at all.



how do I protect myself?

There are simple ways to protect yourself and others from being infected.

- Not having sex (abstinence) is the most effective way to protect yourself from HIV and STI, but this is not always possible.
- If you are having sex, use a condom every time. A condom is a plastic barrier that covers the penis and keeps fluids from being passed from one person to another. Condoms can protect you from HIV, hepatitis B and most STI.
- Don't share injecting needles, tattooing or body piercing equipment, razors, toothbrushes or other personal items with anyone. This will help protect you from hepatitis B and C and HIV.

should I get tested?

If you think you may have an infection, there are many places where you can get tested. Tests for HIV, hepatitis and STI are simple, painless and free. If you have an infection, when you get tested you can access treatment and stop yourself from infecting others.

