HIV/STI CONTACT TRACING IN GENERAL PRACTICE

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General practice provides most sexual health care in NSW and contact tracing is an important part of a comprehensive HIV/STI control program. However, like many doctors you may be unclear about your contact tracing responsibilities. Most people diagnosed with an STI feel that informing their sexual partners is the right thing to do, so won’t be surprised when you talk with them about contact tracing. In NSW, it is the treating doctor’s responsibility to ensure contact tracing occurs, and to support patients in notifying sexual partners.

How can I support my patients with HIV/STI Contact Tracing?

• Assist the patient to identify which partners need to be contacted.
• Offer choice to patients on the best way to inform their partners.
• Different options might suit different partners.

1. Patient notifies their own partners - Partner Referral

Let your patient know you or your practice staff will follow up with a phone call (or at the next visit). If they haven’t been able to let their partners know, then offer further assistance. The expectation of follow up increases the chance that patients will inform their partners.

PATIENT REFERRAL CONTACT TRACING TOOLS:

STI Other than HIV

www.letthemknow.org.au
For anyone.

www.thedramadownunder.info
For men who have sex with men (MSM) with information about STIs. Offers the option of notifying contacts via email or SMS.

www.bettertoknow.org.au
Aimed at Aboriginal People with information about STIs. Offers the option of notifying contacts via email or SMS.

HIV and STI

NSW Sexual Health Infolink
1800 451 624 Patients or partners can ring and speak with a Specialist Sexual Health Nurses Mon–Fri 9am–5pm.

2. GP notifies patient’s partners - Provider Referral

You, a delegate such as a primary care nurse or, if a complex issue, referred to your local sexual health service. The identity of the index patient must not be disclosed to contacts.

Provider referral is the preferred option for HIV. In NSW a new HIV diagnosis will prompt an offer of assistance from a Local Health District expert who will help you provide your patient with the 5 key support areas including contact tracing.


Need assistance or information on Contact Tracing?


SUMMARY

Effective contact tracing prevents reinfection and onward transmission of STIs. It is the treating doctor’s responsibility to ensure contact tracing occurs, and to support their patients in notifying sexual partners.

CONTACT TRACING PRACTICE TIPS

1. If Patient notifies own partners- Patient Referral

• Talk through the information to be shared with partners
• Provide written material or web links.
• Patients can inform a partner by letter, email or SMS.
• Practice staff may be able to help the patient send an email or SMS to their partners before leaving the practice.

2. If GP notifies partners - Provider Referral

• Preferred method for HIV infection
• Get the consent of the patient
• Document discussions
• Refer to local sexual health service if complex or unsuccessful.

Call your local sexual health clinic or the NSW Sexual Health Infolink on 1800 451 624 for assistance.

* Burnet Institute Partner Notification of Sexually Transmitted Infections In New South Wales: An Informed Literature Review June 2010 page 21
* Ibid page 36
A new online learning module aims to inform GPs who wish to become more ‘gay friendly’. The case-based modules explore stigma and discrimination, sexual health screening, common STIs, and specific issues faced by gay men and men who have sex with men (MSM).

**Learning Objectives:**
1. Recognise that Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex (LGBTI) communities have diverse health needs
2. Have greater confidence taking a sexual health history
3. Identify common STIs in gay men and men who have sex with men (MSM)
4. Follow guidelines for STI testing and management in asymptomatic MSM
5. Understand common health issues faced by gay men and MSM

To access the Gay Friendly GP OLM, go to the ASHM Learning Management System (LMS) https://lms.ashm.org.au and register for your login. Then scroll down until you see the Gay Friendly GP OLM.

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We extend an invitation to GPs, practice nurses and relevant clinicians to receive this free twice-yearly newsletter and updates on sexual health.

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