



WA Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) Strategy 2015–2018



The goals of the *WA Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) Strategy 2015–2018* are to reduce the transmission of, and morbidity and mortality caused by STIs, and to minimise the personal and social impact of the infections.

The WA STI strategy is based on a strong partnership approach and collective action between government, non-government, healthcare and research organisations.

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are an important public health issue.

STIs represent a significant burden of disease in Western Australia (WA), with young people and Aboriginal people disproportionately affected.

Despite educational campaigns, high levels of STIs continue to occur in WA, with the incidence in some areas being at epidemic levels.

Reducing the transmission and prevalence of STIs is dependent on a comprehensive, integrated and sustained health promotion and disease prevention approach with emphasis on increasing testing rates across WA, with a particular focus on the priority target groups of young people and Aboriginal people.



**PREVENTION
& EDUCATION**



**TESTING &
DIAGNOSIS**



**DISEASE MANAGEMENT
& CLINICAL CARE**



**WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT**



**ENABLING
ENVIRONMENT**



**RESEARCH, EVALUATION
& SURVEILLANCE**

Most common STIs

Chlamydia

Chlamydia is the most frequently reported notifiable disease in Australia.

In WA in 2014 there were 11,417 cases notified to WA Health. This was a slight decrease on the previous 12 month period. However it was still a 5 per cent increase compared to the historical 5 year average.

Young people aged 15 to 24 years represented 58 per cent of notifications in 2014.

Gonorrhoea

In 2014 WA Health gonorrhoea notifications rose by 12 per cent compared to 2013. The risk category with the greatest increase was 'men who have sex with men' (MSM).

As antibacterial resistance to *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* increases globally, WA Health must also monitor resistance levels statewide.

Strategies

Third National Sexually Transmitted Infections Strategy 2014–2017

In 2014 the Australian Government Department of Health launched the [Third National Sexually Transmitted Infections Strategy 2014–2017 \(external site\)](#). This strategy provides direction for coordinated action to reduce STI:

- transmission
- morbidity
- mortality.

WA STI Strategy 2015–2018

The *WA STI Strategy 2015–2018* will build upon the previous successes achieved through the National STI Strategy and the [WA STI Model of Care Implementation Plan 2010–2014 \(PDF 2.42MB\)](#). These include:

- national human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination program expanded to adolescent males
- increases in testing rates for chlamydia and gonorrhoea
- decrease in rates of STIs in WA Aboriginal people compared with non-Aboriginal people
- implementation of the online chlamydia testing program
- amendments to the *Poisons Regulations (1965)* to allow nurses to distribute specific medications for STI treatment in remote areas
- launch of STI training resources for health professionals.

Priority populations

The strategy's priority populations include:

- young people
- Aboriginal people
- gay men and other men who have sex with men
- sex workers
- culturally and linguistically diverse people
- travellers and mobile workers
- people in custodial settings.

Monitoring and evaluation

The *WA STI Strategy 2015–2018* will be assessed against indicators outlined in the STI Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, which will be updated periodically.

Other sources of data on STIs include the:

- [statewide notifiable disease report for WA \(external site\)](#)
- [quarterly and annual sexually transmitted infections and blood-borne virus reports for WA](#)
- [National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System \(external site\)](#).

[Back to beginning](#)



WA STI Strategy – prevention and education

Build STI-related knowledge and skills in priority populations

This will be achieved by:

- continuing to provide online training and resources for health professionals and teachers
- continuing to facilitate face-to-face training for health professionals and teachers
- continuing to support and provide peer education strategies through NGO-funded programs
- building and sustaining the delivery of evidence-supported school based sexuality education
- using social marketing and social media to provide relevant information to target groups
- continuing to provide targeted education programs around knowledge and skill development
- continuing to provide community education through NGOs and health service providers
- using innovative technology to provide information to target groups.

Increase the use, access to and acceptability of condoms in priority populations

This will be achieved by:

- providing free and low cost condoms where possible
- continuing to provide targeted education programs around use and acceptability with target groups
- continuing to provide community education to enhance acceptability through NGOs and health service providers
- using social marketing and social media to promote condom use as normal.

Increase promotion of safer sex behaviours and regular testing

This will be achieved by:

- using social marketing and social media to promote safer sex behaviours and regular testing
- increasing promotion of online chlamydia testing through websites
- continuing to provide targeted education programs around safer sex and testing
- continuing to provide community education to enhance acceptability through NGOs and health service providers
- enabling and building capacity of school based sexuality education.

[Back to beginning](#)



WA STI Strategy – testing and diagnosis

Build on successful activities

Activities will be reviewed to improve testing rates and coverage in priority populations and age groups.

This will be actioned through:

- increasing opportunistic testing in target groups through education and quality improvement programs within primary health care settings
- supporting the extended scope of practice for registered nurses and Aboriginal health workers to enable increased testing in remote areas and outreach settings
- educating priority populations about the importance of STI testing and how to access STI testing services
- supporting NGOs to provide community education to encourage increased STI testing
- encouraging health professionals to integrate STI testing into regular and existing service delivery at appropriate routine visits
- using social marketing and social media to promote regular STI testing for priority populations
- supporting and providing peer education strategies through NGO funded programs.

Explore feasibility, accessibility and cost effectiveness

The range of existing and emerging testing methods for STIs such as rapid testing will be explored for feasibility, accessibility and cost effectiveness.

This will be actioned through exploring the:

- translation of innovative STI testing methods into community settings supporting community based clinical services which offer cost effective STI testing to priority populations
- feasibility of testing/screening programs in high prevalence areas, in rural and remote areas and within communities at risk.

[Back to beginning](#)



WA STI Strategy – disease management and clinical care

Assess and implement effective tools and activities

Tools and activities to improve STI treatment, management and referral will be assessed and where viable, implemented.

This will be actioned through:

- educating health professionals by integrating STI testing and treatment into existing service delivery at appropriate routine visits
- supporting community education to encourage increased STI testing
- educating priority populations about de-stigmatising STI treatment and management
- promoting online STI clinical treatment, management and referral tools.

Improve models of care

Models of care for priority populations in primary health care settings will be continually improved.

This will be achieved through:

- supporting the extended scope of practice for registered nurses and Aboriginal health workers to improve models of care for priority populations
- supporting health services to re-orient physical environments to be more inclusive of priority populations
- promoting online STI clinical treatment, management and referral tools.

[Back to beginning](#)



WA STI Strategy – workforce development

Work with relevant organisations

Targeted, responsive and coordinated training including continuing education and professional support programs will be delivered.

This will be achieved through:

- collaborating to design and develop online sexual health education training and support
- working with universities and training providers to deliver education and professional support including training for pre-service teachers and health professionals
- staging regular forums, symposia and conferences that bring together affected populations, non-government organisations, researchers, clinicians, practitioners and policy makers working in STI and health
- facilitating partnerships for continued professional support such as the use of video conferencing for rural and remote areas to participate in targeted and coordinated training.

Improve general practitioner skills, knowledge and capacity

Skills, knowledge and capacity among general practitioners will be improved to increase testing rates and treatment of STIs.

This will be achieved through:

- supporting the delivery of online training to provide cultural awareness about sexual health
- providing online resources that improve skills, knowledge and capacity to increase testing rates and treatment
- providing expert information and collegial training to fellow health care providers
- ensuring the education of medical students on sexual health issues
- supporting regular STI updates through provision of sexual health information refresher days.

[Back to beginning](#)



WA STI Strategy – enabling environment

Eliminate stigma and discrimination in community and health care settings

Priority populations will be empowered to eliminate stigma and discrimination in community and health care settings.

This will be achieved through:

- consulting with priority populations to determine the types of stigma and discrimination faced within the community and in health care settings
- involving key members from priority populations in the development of policy, programs and strategies for sexual health
- providing train-the-trainer programs within priority populations to empower community leaders to play an active role in determining community sexual health programs.

Support STI education programs

Education programs addressing vulnerable young people, young gay men, Aboriginal young people within the school system will be supported. Education programs outside of the school system will also be supported.

This will be achieved through:

- continuing to support and provide youth peer education through NGO funded programs
- promoting online education programs that address sexual health and relationships for young people
- supporting and promoting STI and relationship education programs conducted within safe and stigma free environments.

[Back to beginning](#)



WA STI Strategy – research, evaluation and surveillance

Monitor testing coverage for STIs

This will be achieved through:

- continuing to promote effective and efficient STI data collection and analysis systems
- maintaining and improving the reporting of STIs in children under the age of 14
- maintaining effective and timely data collection and analysis systems at the state, regional and service level.

Evaluate health promotion, prevention, testing and treatment programs

This will be achieved through:

- prioritising evaluation for all STI programs and activities across the sector to ensure effectiveness and sustainability
- supporting partnerships across the sector for continued evaluation and sharing results.

Support research

Research will be supported across the relevant disciplines to inform the delivery of the strategy.

Supported research areas will include:

- social
- behavioural
- epidemiological
- clinical.

NGOs will also be supported to explore and evaluate innovative methods of STI testing in collaboration with research institutes.

[Back to beginning](#)

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