

# Easy as One, Two, Pee

**Verse Editor Jesse Neill, visited SHINE SA's Hyde Street clinic and took a general STI screening test to explain to readers how easy the process is and how important it is to get tested.**



**Words by Jesse Neill**

I held the cup in my hand for a while; I'd never peed in a cup before. I closed my eyes and tried to think of something relaxing, to go to my hap-pee place (sorry for the very bad dad joke, I couldn't resist). Doing that never seems to work though. Stage fright had well and truly hit me. However, after a few more awkward moments of silence there was the release, and what a relief it was. I was careful with my aim and slowly filled up my cup – I didn't want this situation to end like an out of control fire hose, flailing around like the arms of inflatable bodies that wave around the front of car yards.

Anyway, I did my business and put the lid on top of the cup before placing it into a brown paper bag. I returned to the consultation room and handed the doctor my urine sample. I was visiting SHINE SA for a check-up, but not the typical GP kind. I was there for a general STI screening test. I decided to take an STI test as part of this edition to share my experience and show how easy it is.

Prior to peeing in a cup, I had to make a booking. I rang up the Hyde Street clinic and they offered me options for an appointment (this particular clinic also offer a walk-in service on Fridays). I chose an afternoon session so I could have extra time to speak with the doctor. I was told how to get there, to bring my Medicare card, and that parking would be a pain in the ass. Other than that it was a relatively brief chat, just like making a booking for any other health service – no personal questions or nasty warnings.

The following day I miraculously found a free parking spot in the city and walked up to the centre. To be honest I was a little nervous

walking into the clinic and I think that's one of the reasons we need to reduce the stigma around STIs and STI testing. They're just like any other infection or illness; we wouldn't judge someone for going to visit their local GP to receive medicine for the flu, so why should we judge others for visiting a sexual health clinic?

A particularly important point I should mention about SHINE SA's Hyde Street clinic, is that it is a general practice, meaning there are psychologists, GPs and counsellors all within the same centre. This makes the visit completely confidential. As there are many different options offered at the one clinic, people have no reason to suspect that you are going there for an STI test or treatment specifically.

I walked into the facility and mentioned I had an appointment. They asked for my name and gave me a form to fill out. I walked into a waiting room and filled out the form, it asked for my personal details, some health questions, my culture, gender and sexuality. Aside from that, there was nothing too personal about my sex life, which if you've ever filled out a blood donation form, would know is far more in-depth.

I should also mention that I felt some nerves once inside the clinic. This anxiety wasn't about doing the test, or perhaps bumping into someone I know, or even having an uncomfortable experience – I was nervous to find out the result. Maybe I had an STI and didn't know? It is quite possible as there are several sexually transmitted infections that don't show symptoms or can have a delayed onset. I think this apprehension is all the more reason young, sexually active adults need to be tested, because



it is far better knowing about an infection you have contracted, rather than avoiding a test due to embarrassment or worry. Getting an STI test is an important step in treating yourself and preventing the spread of infection to others.

After filling out the form, I sat in the waiting room for a few minutes, not really knowing what to expect. I was called into the office by the doctor, took my seat inside and started the consultation. It began with a few general queries before I was asked more specific questions that would highlight my risk of exposure to certain STIs and the type of testing necessary for these. The questions were based around my sexual activities: my recent sexual encounters, the last time I had sex, the last time I had sex with a different partner, and if I had been sexually active overseas or interstate. It can feel a little exposing to be sharing this sort of information with someone you've only just met, but in a way it's actually kind of easy because there's a sort of distance between them and the people you usually interact with in your daily life. You can also rest assured that this information will be kept confidential and the questions are asked in a non-judgemental manner. The doctors do not criticise and do not respond negatively to your questions, they are just looking for the information they need to assist you and to help in providing the most accurate testing. They will then discuss your need for a test and what sort of tests you should have, based on the answers provided. After answering the questions I was told that I could take a general screening test if I wish.

**“...one of the easiest and most effective ways to prevent STIs is to wear a condom or use an internal one. So grab a rubber if you're gonna hubba hubba”**

I was given a urine cup and asked to pee, luckily I'd drunk a lot of water beforehand, something I thoroughly recommend. There's nothing worse than being forced to pee when you really don't feel like it. After providing the urine sample, I also had the option of taking a blood test, which I chose to do, as it provided a more extensive range of testing. The blood test was really quick and I was then asked if I had any personal queries before concluding the consult.

I had a short discussion with the doctor after the consultation about the importance of testing, as well as discussing who should get tested and why. These were some of the most important takeaways I can recall:

1. You should get a test every few months if you are sexually active with multiple partners, especially if they too are sexually active with others.
2. Non-viral STIs are curable and the symptoms of all STIs can be treated and managed with certain medications.
3. Chlamydia is the most common STI in South Australia and can be passed on without any clear symptoms showing up.
4. There have been many advances in the treatment of HIV in the last ten years, in particular the adoption of PrEP and PEP medications, which have shown remarkable success in the prevention of HIV transmission.
5. If you are with a new partner you should encourage each other to take a mutual STI test.
6. And my personal favourite, one of the easiest and most effective ways to prevent STIs is to wear a condom or use an internal one. So grab a rubber if you're gonna hubba hubba.

I'll end this by saying I was relieved to receive a message from SHINE SA the following week, showing that my results had come back negative. On reflecting though, I can't understand why something so easy, pain-free and confidential should be something we are so apprehensive towards. It's for the good of your own health as well as those you have sex with. Health isn't something to take chances on. I encourage you all to go get tested so you can get down to business knowing everything is all good under the hood. Sex should be fun, so let's make it safe too. ◊