

## AHP Practice Tip: Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)

A lot of (young) people are ambivalent about attending their GP for STI screening. However, STIs that are common in young people such as Chlamydia often do NOT have any symptoms. Consequently, the young person may not know that they have contracted an STI and continue to have unprotected sex, putting themselves and others at risk. Untreated Chlamydia can lead to future complications such as infertility. It is important for young people to know that screening for and treatment of STIs is relatively simple.

It may be beneficial to ask the young person how they feel about STI screening:

- *“Are there any concerns that would stop you from talking to your GP about screening to rule out possible STIs?”*
- *“Would you feel more comfortable if I helped discuss your situation with your GP or write a letter outlining why you might choose to do a STI screen?”*

As an AHP, there are a number of things that you can do relating to STIs:

- advise a young person that it is good that they are being proactive about seeking screening for STIs.
- ask if they practise safe sex in terms of exposure to STIs and also contraception.
- ask if they have ever seen their doctor (GP) for sexual health check-ups and explain that they can consult their GP for simple tests for common STIs. Routine screening would usually involve tests for common STIs such as Chlamydia, Gonorrhoea, Syphilis, HIV, Hep C and possibly some other conditions.
- commend the young person’s request for screening and point out that this may save them from embarrassment, guilt or worry down the track.

You could refer to either a GP known to the young person or a local GP doctor; and/or to appropriate websites. It would be appropriate to write a brief clinical letter to a GP introducing the patient and their reasons for referral/consultation re: STI screening.