

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)

Sexually transmitted infections are becoming increasingly common, especially in London and in those aged under 25. Chlamydia and gonorrhoea are the most common infections. They can cause genital irritation, pain and discharge but often do not cause symptoms. Both these infections can lead to pelvic inflammatory disease, ectopic pregnancies and infertility and are both very simple to treat using antibiotics.

Genital warts and herpes are two other infections that can cause lumps and ulcers. There are treatments to limit the symptoms of both.

Dean Street Clinic

The Health Centre continues to work closely with the Dean Street Clinic (part of the HIV/GUM directorate of Chelsea and Westminster Hospital) which is Europe's busiest sexual health clinic

This offers an enhanced sexual health service to students twice a week in term time in the comfort and familiarity of a GP setting. The service is confidential and accessible to any patient regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, culture or sexual orientation. The clinic is primarily for symptomatic male and female patients who can then be provided with diagnosis, treatment and contact tracing. Timely access to services such as this has the potential to disrupt the chain of infection.

Integrating the sexual health service into the health centre aims to reduce the stigma of sexual health consultations and makes the service more accessible and sustainable

[Dean Street Express](#)- Walk-in sexual health testing for people who are symptom free.

HIV

A new report published by PHE : November 2014 shows that there are nearly 110,000 people living with HIV in the UK and around a quarter of these (26,100) are unaware of the infection and are at risk of passing on the virus to others through unprotected sex.

The report shows around 13% men who sleep with men (MSM) in London are living with HIV with 3,250 newly diagnosed in 2013: an all-time high. One in every eight gay men in London is HIV positive (BBC News 2015)

It is estimated that 7,000 gay men have an HIV infection that remains undiagnosed and an estimated 2,800 men acquired HIV in 2013.

"Chemsex" is a growing problem which primarily revolves around parties in private homes centred on communal drug taking and sex. The likes of mephedrone, crystal meth and GHB/GBL ("G" for short) can increase libido and decrease inhibition. In a study published by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, a third of men surveyed described incidents of unintended unprotected sex while under the influence of chemsex drugs.

People who acquired their infection through heterosexual contact accounted for 45% of new HIV diagnoses in the UK in 2013, a decline of 13% compared to 2012.

The number of infections acquired through injecting drug use and through other routes remains low. After adjusting for missing data, 130 new HIV diagnoses in 2013 were infections through drug use, in 2013 20 new diagnoses were reported to be through exposure to contaminated blood products.

To increase the uptake of testing we try to normalise HIV testing within our everyday practice. The GPs will often order the blood test as part of the diagnostic process, for example, when a patient presents with malaise, lethargy, suspected glandular fever etc. We consent patients rather than counsel them prior to the blood test which also includes testing for syphilis. Negative results are given over the phone.

MSM are advised to have HIV/STI screen at least annually or every 3 months if having unprotected sex with new or casual partners.

At Kings we ensure open access to sexual health screening and always advise consistent and correct use of the free condoms available. We also provide advice and guidance where pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is required and also suggest Dean Street advisors at the Chemsex support clinic for counselling.

Sexually Transmitted Disease Update: June 2015(PHE)

There were approximately 440,000 sexually transmitted infections (STI) diagnosed in England in 2014.

The impact of STIs remains greatest in heterosexuals under the age of 25 and in men who have sex with men (MSM).

Although overall numbers of STIs in the 15-24 age group have increased in the last 10 years there has been a decline in genital warts in young females.

The largest proportional increase in diagnoses between 2013 and 2014 were reported for syphilis (33%) and gonorrhoea (19%). Lambeth has the highest level of gonorrhoea in the country with 634 per 100,000 population.

High levels of condom less sex could account for this rise although better detection of gonorrhoea may have contributed.

Almost twice as many heterosexual women as men were diagnosed with genital herpes.

PHE 2015 noted that the number of STIs diagnosed in London in 2014 rose 5% on the previous year to 113,381-bucking a downward national trend.

Dr Yvonne Doyle from PHE stated that risky sexual behaviour while under the influence of drugs was an emerging problem.

London accounts for 1 in 4 of new sexual infections diagnosed.

Public Health England have noted that 20 to 40 % of international travellers seen in STI clinics have sex with a new partner abroad and risk of acquiring an STI is 3 times more likely with travellers who have casual sex.

Chlamydia

One in ten sexually active young people aged between 16 and 24 years have chlamydia infection.

At Kings we encourage annual chlamydia screening and at the change of every partner

Chlamydia was the most commonly diagnosed STI in 2014 with 206, 774 diagnoses in England (Public Health England 2015)

Results from the National Chlamydia Screening Programme (NCSP) indicate a high level of asymptomatic infection that would have otherwise been missed, reinforcing the need for screening in community settings (WHO). Chlamydia infection is the most common cause of pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), ectopic pregnancy and secondary infertility in women in the UK and most of the rest of the world (Paavonen J, 1999).

One reason why chlamydia can be spread so easily is that most infected people are asymptomatic - 90% women and 50% men. The infection is also long lasting such that even those who are monogamous are at risk. Infection can survive months, even years, spanning long intervals between changes of partner.

High rates of chlamydia in 2014 were reported by PHE among under 25 year olds in Lewisham, Southwark, Lambeth and Wandsworth with the highest rate in the country in Hackney.

Patient education remains paramount, ensuring that people do not become complacent and regard chlamydia testing as more important than safe sex.