

Fact Sheet

Private Body Parts - Keeping Them Healthy



All women and men need to look after their private body parts to stay healthy. When a person does this we say they are looking after their sexual health. A doctor can help a person to look after their sexual health. It is good to visit a doctor when:

- A person wants to check that their private body parts are healthy
- A person wants to talk about the contraception they want to use
- A person thinks they might have a sexually transmissible infection (STI)
- A woman wants to get some advice about her periods
- A woman wants to get some advice about menopause
- A person wants to find out more about sex

A person can go to the doctor on their own or they can take a partner, friend, family member or support worker with them. The other person can be a man or a woman.

Making an appointment

When a person wants to visit their doctor they should ring and make an appointment. An appointment is a specific time for the person to go to see the doctor at the clinic. If they want to go to a Family Planning or sexual health clinic, the number a person should ring depends on where they live. For more information about Family Planning and sexual health clinics go to the fact sheet called 'Where to go for help or advice'.

Tell the receptionist if you need an accessible bed

Some clinics have accessible beds for people with disability who cannot climb up onto a bed. Accessible beds are beds that are easy for a person with a disability to get on to. Some people who use a wheelchair or a walking frame need a bed like this. When a person rings to make an appointment it is a good idea to tell the person who answers the phone that an accessible bed is needed.

Before the appointment

Before the appointment it is also a good idea for a person to make a list of any medicines they are taking and any information about their health that might be important. They should take this list with them to show the doctor.



Health checks for women

A woman can visit her doctor to make sure her private body parts are healthy and to find out how to keep them healthy. The doctor may need to look at the woman's private body parts. There are some specific reasons why a woman might visit her doctor to look after her sexual health. Some of these are:

- She wants to make sure her cervix (opening of the uterus) is healthy. It is important that a woman goes to a doctor every two years to have her cervix checked. This is called cervical cancer screening or a Pap test
- She wants some help to learn how to check that her breasts do not have lumps and to find out how to keep her breasts healthy
- She is over 50 years old and wants to have a mammogram. A mammogram is another way to check that the breasts are healthy
- She is planning to become pregnant or wants to find out if she is pregnant. For more information go to the fact sheet called 'Planning pregnancy and pregnancy choices'
- She wants to check if she has an STI. For more information go to the fact sheet called 'Safe sex and sexually transmissible infections'

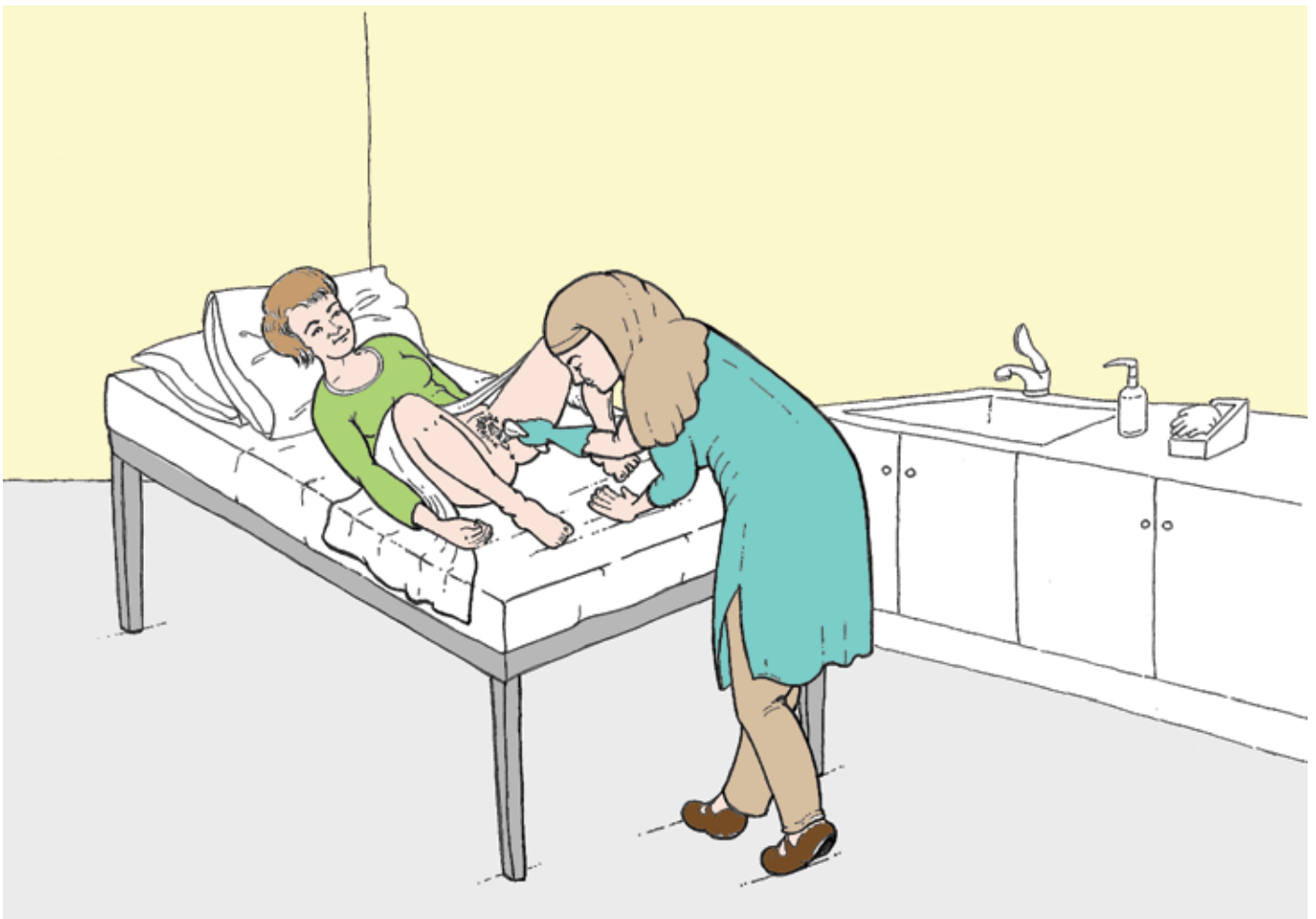
Sometimes, when a woman first visits her doctor, the doctor will ask if the woman wants to have a Pap test and show her how to check her breasts. Pap tests and breast checks are important ways of helping a woman to stay healthy. They do not hurt but they can be a little uncomfortable.

The Pap test

This is the name of a test that a woman has to make sure the cervix is healthy. After a woman starts having sex it is very important for her to have this test done once every two years. She can have the test done by her doctor or at a Family Planning clinic.

The doctor or nurse will ask the woman some questions about her health. The doctor or nurse will then ask the woman to take off her underpants behind a screen so it is private, then the woman lies on a bed. The doctor will explain to the woman what is happening and will carefully open the woman's vagina with a speculum. A speculum is a plastic or metal tool that the doctor or nurse puts into the woman's vaginal opening so that they can see inside to her cervix. They use a small soft brush to gently take cells from around the opening of the cervix to check that it is healthy. A Pap test should not hurt. If it feels uncomfortable, the woman should tell the doctor or nurse.

The Pap test result is usually sent to the woman about two weeks later. When a woman has a Pap test she will be asked if it is OK for her name to go on a list called the Pap Test Register. If the woman forgets to have her next Pap test, she will be sent a letter to remind her to make an appointment to have another Pap test. It is important for a woman to tell the doctor at the clinic if she changes her address so that she will get a letter to remind her to have her next Pap test.



Breast checks

Sometimes women get lumps in their breasts. Mostly this is nothing to worry about but it could mean that something is wrong. It is important for women to get to know what their breasts look like and feel like. If a woman finds any changes in her breasts, she should see her doctor straight away for a check-up. A woman should have a check-up if any of the things in this list happen to her:

- If she finds a new lump in her breast
- If the size or shape of her breast changes
- If she finds any changes to her nipple
- If she has pain in the breast that doesn't go away

A woman who is aged from 50 to 69 years should have a mammogram every two years. A mammogram is an x-ray (picture) of a woman's breasts that can show if the woman's breasts are healthy or not. A woman can make a free appointment for a mammogram with a BreastScreen Australia service. For more information go to the fact sheet called 'Where to go for help or advice'.



Health checks for men

A man can visit his doctor to make sure his private body parts are healthy and to find out how to keep them healthy. The doctor may need to look at the man's private body parts.

Checking for STIs

A man can visit his doctor if he wants to check if he has an STI. For more information go to the fact sheet called 'Safe sex and sexually transmissible infections'

Checking testes for lumps

Sometimes men get lumps on their testes. Sometimes this is nothing to worry about but it could mean that something is wrong. If a man finds any lumps, swelling, heaviness or pain in his testes, he should see his doctor straight away for a check-up.

Prostate tests

The prostate is where a man's semen is made and stored. The prostate is on the inside of a man's body. A man cannot see his prostate as it is covered by his skin. Some men get lumps on their prostate. Sometimes this is nothing to worry about but it could mean that something is wrong. A doctor can do a test to make sure a man's prostate is healthy. Not every man needs to have a prostate test. A man should talk to his doctor to find out if he needs a prostate test.

When a man finds it difficult to get an erection

Sometimes when a man wants to have sex his penis does not get hard or it does not stay hard. This happens to all men sometimes. If this happens to a man a lot, or all the time, it is called impotence. When this happens it can make a man feel upset, worried or confused. It is not the man's fault if he cannot get an erection. A man should talk to his doctor if he is worried about his erections.





What you need to know:

- You need to visit a doctor to keep your private body parts healthy
- You need to ring to make an appointment to see a doctor
- When you ring to make an appointment, tell the person who answers the phone why you are visiting
- When you ring to make an appointment, tell the person who answers the phone if you need an accessible bed
- If a woman has ever had sex, she should go to her doctor for a Pap test every two years
- It is a good idea for a woman to get to know what her breasts look like and feel like
- A woman should see her doctor if she notices any changes in her breasts
- Women aged from 50 to 69 years should have a mammogram every two years
- A man should see his doctor if he notices any changes in his testes

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