



## Ready for college and university life in London? Be sure to protect against STIs and measles, which remain high in the capital

**Press release: 25 September 2024**

As Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) remain high among young people, especially in London, the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) is advising students heading to freshers' week to use condoms when having sex with new or casual partners.

[The most recent 2023 data](#) from UKHSA show that London has a large percentage of England's STI cases, including in the 15-24 age group:

- 19% for chlamydia (19,368 out of 104,107 national cases)
- 26% for genital warts (1,181 out of 4,617 national cases)
- 23% for gonorrhoea (6,831 out of 29,880 national cases)

These infections spread easily, and those aged 15 to 24 are especially at risk as they are more likely to have [frequent partner changes](#).

While many STIs can be treated, untreated infections can lead to serious health issues. Chlamydia and gonorrhoea may cause infertility and pelvic inflammatory disease, while syphilis can result in severe, irreversible problems affecting the brain, heart, or nerves.

Some people will have symptoms of an infection (such as a discharge, pain while urinating or an unusual rash or blisters) but many people do not show symptoms which means people often pass on STIs without realising it. Regular testing for STIs and HIV is essential – everyone should have an STI screen, including an HIV test, at least once a year if having condomless sex with new or casual partners.

Testing is free – including for students who have moved here from another country - and can be accessed through [local sexual health clinics](#), university and college medical centres.

Many sexual health services in England now offer free STI self-sampling kits for people who aren't showing any symptoms or signs of an STI and would prefer a routine check-up in the comfort and privacy of their own home; if you are in London, self-sampling can be accessed from <https://www.shl.uk>. If you notice any unusual symptoms, make sure to [contact your local sexual health service](#) and get tested.

## Checking your vaccines are up to date

UKHSA is also reminding students to ensure they are up to date with their free NHS vaccines, including MMR, MenACWY and the HPV vaccine. The MenACWY jab can be a lifesaver, protecting against some types of meningitis. The HPV vaccine, as well as protecting against some forms of cancer, also reduces the risk of genital warts.

### Dr Yvonne Young, London Regional Deputy Director for UKHSA, said:

*“Starting university and college is an exciting time, meeting new people and socialising is an important part of the experience. However, London has a significant proportion of sexually transmitted infections compared to other areas of the country, including in young adults, so it’s really important that people are aware of the risks of catching an STI from condomless sex.*

*“STIs can pose serious consequences to health – both your own and that of current and future sexual partners. If you have sex with a new or casual partner, make sure you use condoms, and regular testing for STIs and HIV is essential to maintain good sexual health. Testing is free and confidential and can be accessed through local sexual health clinics, university and college medical centres, or through self-sampling kits sent discreetly through the post.*

*“We are also urging young people starting or returning to university or college in London to check they’ve had the MMR due to an ongoing outbreak of measles in the city. Other vaccinations that are important for protecting the health of students include MenACWY and HPV, and in London the mpox vaccine is available for eligible men who are gay, bisexual or have sex with other men. There is good information about vaccines and how to get them on the NHS website or speak to a health professional if unsure.”*

**Ends**

### Notes to editors:

1. [Annual STIs data](#) (see table 2 for data by region and age group)
2. For home STI testing, regular and emergency contraception in London, visit [Sexual Health London • SHL.UK](#)
3. Latest measles data – <https://ukhsa-dashboard.data.gov.uk/topics/measles> (includes regional and local authority data)
4. The MenACWY vaccine, which offers protection against meningitis, is available to anyone who missed the vaccine up to their 25th birthday. While the MenACWY vaccine offers protection against 4 kinds of meningococcal disease, it does not protect against all forms, like MenB, which is why it’s important to know how to spot the symptoms of Meningitis and septicaemia as early detection and treatment can prove lifesaving.
5. [Vaccine communications toolkit for universities and other higher education settings](#)
6. NHS information about key vaccines:
  - [MMR](#)
  - [MenACWY](#)
  - [HPV](#)
  - [Mpox](#) (for eligible men who are gay, bisexual or have sex with other men)
  - Further vaccines - <https://www.nhs.uk/vaccinations/>

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