

FAQs for health professionals

13 HEALTH webtest

What is 13 HEALTH webtest?

- a. 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84) webtest is a pilot health services research project being implemented by a collaboration of the Communicable Diseases Branch and Health Contact Centre (13 HEALTH), Queensland Health; with public and private pathology providers.
- b. 13 HEALTH webtest aims to provide additional testing options for young people at risk of STIs when they are unlikely or unable to attend a health service.
- c. Most people prefer to see their doctor for STI testing and follow-up, so 13 HEALTH webtest is likely to be a small project.

Who can use 13 HEALTH webtest?

- a. Queensland residents aged 16 years or older can order a free chlamydia and gonorrhoea urine test through 13 HEALTH webtest. Information for participants is available at www.health.qld.gov.au/13health/webtest.
- b. Participants will be able to request chlamydia and gonorrhoea urine testing via the internet after completing an online sexual health risk assessment including 4 quick questions.
- c. If participants answer 'yes' to the risk assessment questions about experiencing symptoms or have been advised by a sexual contact to get tested, the web page will display information to encourage them to see a doctor or sexual health service for treatment and clinical follow-up rather than use the online testing service.

Can this service be accessed without participating in the research project?

- a. No, by using this service participants agree to participate in the research project to monitor and measure the service uptake and effectiveness.
- b. If participants do not wish to participate in the research project, they will be encouraged to access other testing services.

What does the research project involve?

- a. As this is a new service offering an alternative way of testing, it is part of a health services research project.
- b. The study is being conducted by the Communicable Diseases Branch and Health Contact Centre (13 HEALTH or 13 43 25 84) within Queensland Health, in collaboration with Pathology Queensland and private pathology providers.
- c. The aim of the research is to find out who is using the service (age, gender, geographic location, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status, STI risk score, test results), which testing methods participants prefer (pathology request form and collection centre attendance or home mailing kit and sending a urine sample for analysis) and what action those with positive results took (time to treatment, partner notification).

- d. Participation in this study is voluntary. Participants can withdraw at any time; however, any information entered into the online system cannot be withdrawn.
- e. Once a pathology form has been downloaded or a home mailing kit ordered, participants can still choose not to submit a urine sample.
- f. Aggregated and de-identified data will be collected and used to monitor and evaluate the service, and produce academic publications.
- g. This study has been approved by the Mater Misericordiae Ltd Human Research Ethics Committee (EC00332).

How does 13 HEALTH webtest work?

- a. 13 HEALTH webtest is not changing how pathology testing and medical treatment is done. It is offering an additional method for young people at risk of STIs to access testing and receive results when they are unlikely or unable to attend a health service.
- b. A free chlamydia and gonorrhoea test can be requested by downloading an online pathology form and visiting a collection centre or by ordering a home mailing kit, collecting a urine sample and mailing it back for processing.
- c. All pathology results will be reviewed by the Senior Medical Officer, Health Contact Centre (13 HEALTH).
- d. All participants, regardless of pathology test result, will be followed up by 13 HEALTH. Participants with normal (negative) results will receive an SMS. Participants with positive results will be contacted by phone call.
- e. Participants with positive results will be encouraged to attend a health service for treatment and a more comprehensive sexual health check.
- f. Participants are able to ask for an extra copy of their test results to be sent to their doctor by providing the doctor's name and address when completing other pathology request information.

What tests are used by 13 HEALTH webtest?

- a. Participants need to provide a first-catch urine sample, which will be tested for chlamydia and gonorrhoea by Nucleic Acid Amplification Testing (NAAT) or polymerase chain reaction (PCR) method as per standard pathology laboratory processes. The test looks for the genetic material of the bacteria causing the infection and is very sensitive.
- b. Most pathology laboratories in Australia use dual NAAT methods for chlamydia and gonorrhoea, which is why 13 HEALTH webtest includes gonorrhoea although it is not as common as chlamydia.
- c. Web information advises participants that if they have had oral or anal sex, or think they may have been exposed to other STIs, it is a good idea to see a doctor for a comprehensive sexual health check. A doctor can order additional tests, collect samples from the anus or throat, or request a blood test for other STIs like syphilis and HIV.

Who does the testing?

- a. The Senior Medical Officer, Health Contact Centre (13 HEALTH) is the requesting practitioner and the Communicable Diseases Branch is funding the pilot project and pathology tests. Participants do not need to provide their Medicare number to request the tests.
- b. All home mailing kit urine samples will be processed by the Central Laboratory, Pathology Queensland.

- c. Participants choosing to download a pathology request form and attend a pathology collection centre to provide their urine sample can do so at collection centres for Pathology Queensland, Mater Pathology, QML, or Sullivan Nicolaides Pathology at no cost.
- d. Samples will be processed at the relevant pathology laboratories as per standard NAAT/PCR testing procedures.

How is informed consent for testing obtained?

- a. Before requesting a pathology form or home mailing kit, participants must indicate that they understand what tests they can get, that the service is not the same as attending a clinic in person, and that by accessing the service they agree to participate in this research project.
- b. A detailed privacy statement and research information sheet for 13 HEALTH webtest is available on the website.

How are results and other follow-up handled?

- a. All positive and equivocal or no test results are followed up by 13 HEALTH by phone.
- b. 13 HEALTH phone follow-up will be scheduled at various times of day. If 3 call attempts have been unsuccessful, an SMS will be sent to ask the participant to call 13 HEALTH and mention webtest. Up to 8 call attempts are standard practice for 13 HEALTH.
- c. 13 HEALTH will support people with a positive test result to access a health service as soon as possible and discuss partner notification. Referral letters will be offered to participants with a positive result and quick treatment is desirable.
- d. If the result is equivocal, 13 HEALTH will phone the participant and recommend they attend a clinician for review. Referral letters will be offered to participants with an equivocal result.
- e. For participants with a positive or equivocal result, 13 HEALTH will implement a 1 week follow-up phone call to see if they have attended a health service for treatment or review. If not, another phone call will be made a week later (i.e. 2 weeks after they were notified of their positive result). 13 HEALTH will also send a 3-month reminder SMS to all participants with a positive chlamydia or gonorrhoea result to encourage retesting to detect reinfection.
- f. Participants are able to nominate contact preferences, which can also include email. If phone and email is unsuccessful a letter will be sent.
- g. Chlamydia and gonorrhoea are notifiable conditions under the Queensland Public Health Act 2005 and the Public Health Regulations 2005. Positive results will be notified by the laboratory to the Notifiable Conditions System as per standard practice.
- h. If the result is normal (no chlamydia or gonorrhoea bacteria detected) 13 HEALTH will send a short SMS from webtest to let the participant know.
- i. If no results are received 4 weeks after requesting a pathology form or home mailing kit, 13 HEALTH will phone the participant to see what they decided to do about testing and encourage them to participate if they have not already accessed testing through a clinic.

How and why will a person present to me from 13 HEALTH webtest?

- a. The person presenting to you may have received a letter showing their positive result, they may have received an SMS sent from 13 HEALTH, or you may have received a copy of the result (if the person requested a copy be sent to you).

- b. A useful resource is the Australian STI Management Guidelines for Use in Primary Care, available at www.sti.guidelines.org.au.
- c. Quick treatment is desirable and as the guidelines recommend treatment if there is a high index of clinical suspicion (e.g. symptoms or a contact of someone with an infection), it is recommended that you start treatment of the person or a contact even in the absence of a test result.
- d. Partner notification should have been discussed by 13 HEALTH, but, as you are conducting a more thorough clinician-led dialogue around all STIs and sexual health including partner notification, it would be appreciated if you could confirm the partner is aware. It would be appreciated if after your discussion you could arrange additional testing as indicated.
- e. As you develop your regular clinical relationship, it would be appreciated if you could stress the importance of regular sexual health checks and safe sex, as people are often not aware that immunity to new infection is not provided by previous infection and treatment.
- f. 13 HEALTH webtest will send the patient a reminder SMS for retesting after 3 months, but you may also like to include this in your clinical follow-up reminder systems.

What do Australian guidelines recommend about empirical treatment?

- a. For chlamydia, the Australian STI Management Guidelines for Use in Primary Care, available at www.sti.guidelines.org.au, include the following treatment advice:
- b. Treat immediately if high index of suspicion (e.g. symptomatic and/or signs, or contact of index case).
- c. Start treatment for patient and sexual partner(s) without waiting for lab results.
- d. The RACGP guidelines for preventive activities in general practice, available at www.racgp.org.au/your-practice/guidelines, also state that all partners of those infected should be treated presumptively and this is currently the accepted practice of most sexual health services.
- e. If you are concerned about treatment or that the patient may be experiencing problematic repeat infections, please seek advice from or refer them to a sexual health clinic.

Who can I contact if I have questions about 13 HEALTH webtest?

- a. If the question is about the project in general and not specific to your client, please contact BBVCDU@health.qld.gov.au or call (07) 3328 9728 and ask to speak to the STI team, BBVSTI Unit, Communicable Diseases Branch.
- b. For 13 HEALTH processes and more detailed follow-up questions in relation to testing or a client, please contact 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84), ask for the webtest team and identify yourself as a health professional.
- c. If a patient would like to discuss their rights as a participant in this study, or make an independent complaint, they may contact the Coordinator/ Chairperson, Human Research Ethics Committee, Mater Misericordiae Ltd, Level 2 Aubigny Place, Raymond Terrace, South Brisbane 4101, telephone (07) 3163 1585, email research.ethics@mmri.mater.org.au.