



HYPHEN HEALTH

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media release

Deadline Looms For Sexual Health Telehealth Item Numbers As Stigma Health Proves Easier Access Improves STI Testing Rates

SYDNEY, Australia, 14 December 2023 - If the latest sexual transmitted infection (STI) data is anything to go by, the removal of Medicare telehealth item numbers on sexual health services at the end of this year could prove disastrous for an already perilous situation for STI numbers in Australia.

James Sneddon, co-founder of [Stigma Health](#), Australia's largest online sexual health clinic along with thousands of primary care and sexual health workers are still waiting on word from the Department of Health and Aged Care (DoHAC) as to whether the item numbers will remain in place beyond the 31st December extension announced earlier this year, following strong lobbying from the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP).

"More than a third of our patients utilising the asynchronous option are first-time STI testers, which proves the importance of this service and we continue to advocate strongly for this to be put in place permanently. Access to STI testing and sexual health services in a non-judgemental and online environment is critical to the uplift of testing rates in Australia." Sneddon said.

Surprisingly, telehealth MBS numbers for sexual and reproductive health items were only confirmed on a temporary basis, unlike many others that were made permanent in 2022.

"The stigma around requesting an STI test as well as cost are both huge barriers for people - we are asking the DoHAC to take a patient centered approach to how we deliver a sensitive service such as this that ultimately benefits the health of the community greatly. We need to do better at this stuff". Sneddon continued.

Data released this month from the National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System (NNDSS) showed a significant spike in STI infections between 2021 to 2023, specifically a 45 per cent increase in gonorrhoea and a 24 per cent increase in confirmed cases of chlamydia.

Young people in the 15 to 29 age bracket make up the majority of these numbers, with 67 per cent of all chlamydia infections and 50 per cent of gonorrhoea infections.





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Stigma Health offers comprehensive testing with a bulk-bill option for Chlamydia, Gonorrhoea, Syphilis, Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, and HIV. Access is available through www.stigmahealth.com or via the Stigma Health app.

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MEDIA CONTACT

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About Stigma Health

Stigma Health is making sexual health sexy!

Established in 2015 by practitioner Dr Mitchell Tanner and rugby-playing accountant and entrepreneur James Sneddon, these two blokes are on a mission to make STI testing available to every Aussie who's living their best sex positive life. That means removing the need for that awkward face-to-face doctor visit that is just cringe (*dead*). Stigma Health is already Australia's largest sexual health clinic group, delivering STI testing to over 30,000 lovers, through an online, discreet, convenient sexual health service. So, no more excuses honey - download the Stigma Health app or visit www.stigmahealth.com and get tested today!

