

Your Sexual Health

If you want to make money from sex work you need to be able to work when you want to. That means being free of Sexually Transmitted Infections so you don't lose time off work.

It's an offence to do sex work if you know you are infected with a Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI or STD). The penalty is a fine of up to \$2000 (Prostitution Control Act 1994).

If you are charged you need to be able to prove in Court that you believed (on reasonable grounds) that you weren't infected with an STI. You need to prove that you have been having blood tests every three months and swab tests for STIs monthly.

Under the law, sex workers are responsible for their own STI check-ups, not the establishment they work for (PCA 1994). STIs that are named in the regulations (1995) are:

- AIDS
- Genital herpes (when lesions are visible)
- Genital warts (when lesions are visible)
- Genital Chlamydia
- Gonorrhoea
- Syphilis
- Chancroid, Donovanosis, Lymphogranuloma venereum: these are three tropical conditions that are very rare in Victoria

HIV is not named in the regulations, though it can lead to AIDS. Trichomoniasis is a sexually transmissible infection although it is not named in the regulations. Candidiasis or Thrush, though not an STI, can be transmitted by sexual contact.

If you work in a licensed brothel, the owner or manager is legally obliged to supply you with information about STIs so that you can work safely. They must also provide this information in a variety of language to clients (Health [Infectious Diseases] Regulations 2001).

An escort agency, brothel or other prostitution business is not allowed to let you work if they know you have an STI. The fine is up to \$5000. The owner or approved manager may ask you to provide proof of regular STI checks in case they are ever charged with this offence.

This does **not** mean that you have to give your employer results of any STI test! Most workers provide a Certificate of Attendance from their doctor, making sure there is no result on it. An owner or approved manager is not allowed to display a Certificate of Attendance or use STI test results to make a client believe that a worker is STI free.

Any information you give your employer about your health is confidential. Your employer must not share this kind of information without your consent. If they do, they are breaking the law.

You can get free and confidential STI testing from the Melbourne Sexual Health Centre (1800 032 017). You can also contact RhED on (03) 9534 8166 for more information about STIs.

This is only a brief overview and should not substitute for professional medical advice.

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