

When you need help for your health (Sexual and reproductive health)

We know that women want accurate, reliable, and local information about their healthcare options.

We also know that sexual health can feel awkward or difficult to talk about, even with a doctor or health professional.

It's important to have access to quality, non-judgemental and supportive healthcare to stay in control of your sexual and reproductive health.

What do you need from your healthcare?

Not all sexual healthcare is the same. There's a big variety in factors such as cost, the continuity in your care, and the kinds of care available. When looking for a health professional or service, some of the things you might consider are:

- How much you are willing or able to pay
- Whether you need care for symptoms or a health condition soon, or over the long term
- How close the service is to home, work, or campus
- Opening hours, availability of appointments, and wait times
- Your preference for a doctor, nurse or health professional of a particular gender
- Your preference for a health professional with particular language skills or cultural awareness
- Your preference for a health professional or clinic providing LGBTIQ+ affirming care

When deciding if your health care provider is right for you, ask yourself:

- Did I feel comfortable and supported with them?
- Was I able to ask the questions that I needed to?
- Did I get the outcome I needed?

TIP: Look for General Practitioners (GPs or doctors) with an interest in sexual or women's health, training in Mirena and Implanon insertion or the National Certificate in Reproductive and Sexual Health

During an appointment, it can be difficult to keep track of everything you've discussed. Don't be afraid to ask questions if you're unsure! Choose Wisely Australia¹ recommends asking:

- What is this test, treatment or procedure for, and do I really need it?
- What are the risks?
- What are the costs?
- Do I have other options?
- What happens if I decide not to do anything?

Women's Health Matters is an independent, non-partisan think tank that works to improve the health and wellbeing of all women in the ACT and surrounding region. To learn more about us and what we do, visit www.womenshealthmatters.org.au

¹ NPS Medicine Wise (n.d.), '5 questions to ask your doctor or other healthcare provider', Choosing Wisely Australia, available from: <https://www.choosingwisely.org.au/resources/consumers-and-carers/5questions>, 14/2/2022

Where to go

There are different healthcare services you can access for your sexual health. The right service will depend on your needs and priorities. Some services you might consider include:

Healthdirect

The healthdirect helpline is a free, 24/7 advice line where you can talk to a registered nurse about your health issue and who can advise you on whether your issue is urgent. Registered nurses can arrange a call-back from a GP if needed.

1800 022 222

General Practitioners (GPs)

GPs are doctors who are the first place you go when you have a health issue or need, including contraception and sexual health checks. GP practices are privately-run and each practice will charge different amounts for appointments. Some GPs provide bulk billed services, which means they are free if you have a Medicare Card. Some GPs have a special interest in

You can search healthdirect.gov.au/australian-health-services for a list bulk billing GPs in the ACT based on postcode and accessibility requirements.

Walk-in Centres

Walk-in Centres in Dickson, Belconnen, Gungahlin, Tuggeranong and Weston Creek provide free health care (including for international students) from nurse practitioners for non-life-threatening injuries and illnesses, including emergency contraception and testing and treatment for urinary tract infections. They are open 7:30am to 10:00pm daily. No appointment is needed.

health.act.gov.au/hospitals-and-health-centres/walk-centres

MSI Australia

MSI Australia provides medical and surgical abortions and contraception. Abortion is provided for free and includes long-acting reversible contraception, including for international students.

1300 863 549 or

www.mariestopes.org.au/bookings/locations/canberra/

Canberra Sexual Health Centre (CSHC)

Provides non-judgemental and free sexual health care (sexual health checks, testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections), including for international students. Same day or next business day appointments are often available.

02 5124 2184

Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT (SHFPACT)

SHFPACT offers sexual or reproductive health care, including provide pap smears/cervical screening, STI checks and contraception and fertility advice. Concessional fees are available for everyone 21 and under, full time students under 25, and Commonwealth concession card holders.

02 6247 3077 or

www.shfpact.org.au/index.php/clinic

Meridian Pop-up GP Clinic

The Meridian GP pop-up provides short-term or one-off GP support for LGBTIQ+ folk who experience barriers to seeing a safe and affirming GP, that operates Thursday mornings. Services are by appointment, and may be bulk-billed.

02 6257 2855 or

wellbeingservices@meridianact.org.au

Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health and Community Services GPs

Winnunga is a health service with GPs and nurses run by the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community. It is free for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.

02 6284 6222

Women's Health Service

Provides free health assessment and short term care with a nurse or doctor for women who have difficulty accessing health services and who have a Medicare Card. All doctors and nurses are women.

02 5124 178