



For Immediate Release | March 29, 2018

Online STI and HIV testing reduces barriers, reaches more people in Interior Health

A first of its kind online testing program has been successfully reaching those seeking testing for sexually-transmitted infections (STI) and blood borne diseases. In partnership with Interior Health and LifeLabs, the BC Centre for Disease Control's (BCCDC) online testing program expanded to two Interior Health communities in 2016: Nelson and Kamloops. Now an evaluation shows the program is effectively reaching those who have faced barriers to testing in the past, as well as those at higher risk of infection and first-time testers.

"An individual's sexual health can be neglected based on shame, embarrassment, or inconvenience. But if Sexually Transmitted Infections are not identified and treated they can result in serious health concerns," said Maja Karlsson, HIV and Health Outreach Manager, Interior Health. "The results of this evaluation clearly underscore the value of this free and convenient online testing service, particularly for those at increased risk."

[GetCheckedOnline](#) is an internet-based service that allows people to test for sexually-transmitted and blood borne infections without needing to visit a doctor, and to get their results online.

The program first launched in 2014 in Vancouver and is the first provincial program of its kind in Canada. In 2016, GetCheckedOnline was expanded to Kamloops and Nelson within Interior Health, as well as Victoria, Langford and Duncan on Vancouver Island. The communities were selected to include a cross-section of rural and urban communities.

An evaluation of the first 18-months shows GetCheckedOnline has been successful in Interior Health. In a survey, 100% of GetCheckedOnline clients in Interior Health were satisfied or very satisfied with their testing experience and 96% said they would use the service again. Other results show:

- 590 individuals in IH have tested with GetCheckedOnline during this 18-month period.
- 21% of all positive diagnoses through GetCheckedOnline were from Interior Health.
- 20% reported it was their first time testing.
- GetCheckedOnline is reaching those in Interior Health who have a higher risk of infection:
 - 42% reported having condomless sex;
 - 16% reported having four-or-more sexual partners;
 - 13% reported having a previous STI diagnosis in the past year.

Research showed that before using GetCheckedOnline, clients had experienced challenges such as long wait times for appointments, difficulty getting to a clinic, shame around testing, or fear of judgement from health-care providers, when accessing traditional testing.

"GetCheckedOnline helps people take control of their sexual health," said Dr. Mark Gilbert, GetCheckedOnline's medical lead with the BCCDC. "There are a number of reasons why people don't test – it could be clinic hours or wait times, stigma, or embarrassment talking about sex with their doctor. GetCheckedOnline helps break down those barriers and makes it easier for people to test."

Next steps

Discussions about further expanding GetCheckedOnline within Interior Health are underway. Dr. Gilbert and his team were recently awarded a \$2-million grant from Canadian Institutes of Health Research. The five-year grant will be used to evaluate the continued scale-up of GetCheckedOnline in B.C., how its usability could be improved including translation into multiple languages, and to assess how it could be implemented in Toronto. The team is international in scope and includes researchers, public health, clinicians and community organizations from across B.C. and Ontario.

About Get Checked Online

- GetCheckedOnline is the first online service in Canada that offers confidential testing for chlamydia, gonorrhoea, HIV, syphilis, and hepatitis C.
- The program was developed by the BCCDC in partnership with the BC Public Health Laboratory, and now works in collaboration with regional health authorities and LifeLabs.
- From September 2014 to January 2018, 6,119 people have tested with GetCheckedOnline in B.C.
- Clients visit the [website](#), create an account, answer a sexual history questionnaire and generate a laboratory requisition. They then go to a [participating LifeLabs](#) location in their community to give specimens, and are notified by email when their results are ready. If all results are negative, they can be viewed online. Clients with positive or inconclusive results will be contacted by a BCCDC nurse to arrange follow-up and appropriate treatment.
- GetCheckedOnline is an extension of the BCCDC's clinical services arm for sexually transmitted infections and has undergone rigorous reviews to safeguard privacy, security and confidentiality.

Learn More

- See the Expansion Outcomes infographic for more information about GCO in [Interior Health](#), [Island Health](#), and across [British Columbia](#).
- [Smart Sex Resource](#)
- [Get Checked Online](#)
- [BCCDC Reportable Disease Dashboard](#)

The BC Centre for Disease Control, an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority, provides public health leadership through surveillance, detection, treatment, prevention and consultation services. The Centre provides diagnostic and treatment services for people with diseases of public health importance, and analytical and policy support to all levels of government and health authorities. The BCCDC also provides health promotion and prevention services to reduce the burden of chronic disease and preventable injury. For more, visit www.bccdc.ca or follow us on Twitter [@CDCofBC](#).

The Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA) plans, manages and evaluates selected specialty and province-wide health care services across BC, working with the five geographic health authorities to deliver province-wide solutions that improve the health of British Columbians. For more information, visit www.phsa.ca or follow us on Twitter [@PHSAofBC](#).

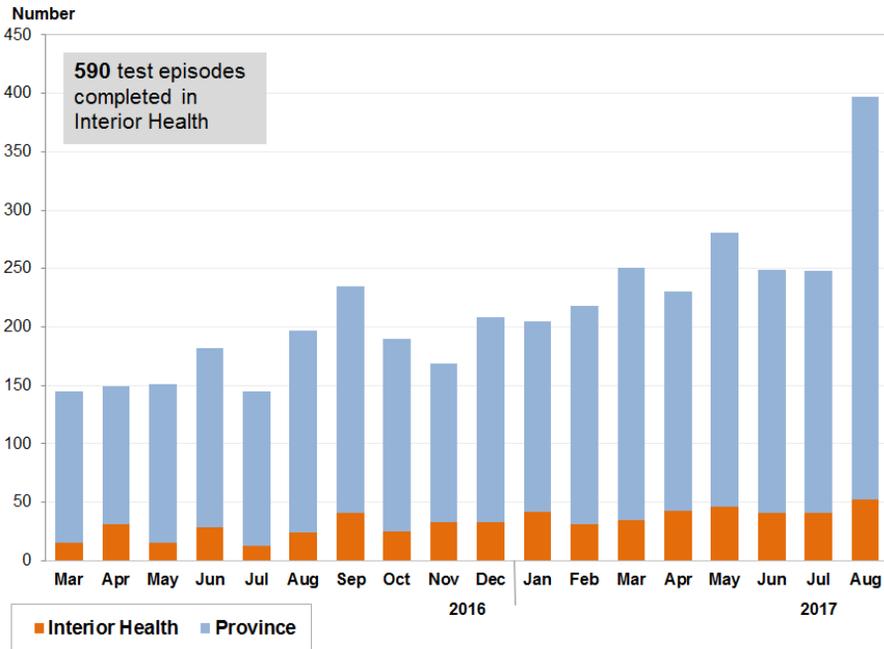
Interior Health is committed to promoting healthy lifestyles and providing a wide range of quality health-care services to more than 740,000 people living across B.C.'s vast interior. For more information, visit www.interiorhealth.ca, follow us on Twitter [@Interior_Health](#), or like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/InteriorHealth.

GetCheckedOnline in Interior Health: Expansion Outcomes (March 2016 - August 2017)

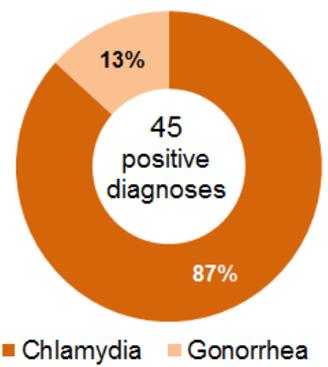
What is GetCheckedOnline?

GetCheckedOnline (GCO) is an internet-based service that lets people test for sexually transmitted and blood borne infections, and get their results online. GCO was launched in select communities within Interior Health in March 2016 (Kamloops and Nelson). This fact sheet describes outcomes from the first 18 months post-implementation.

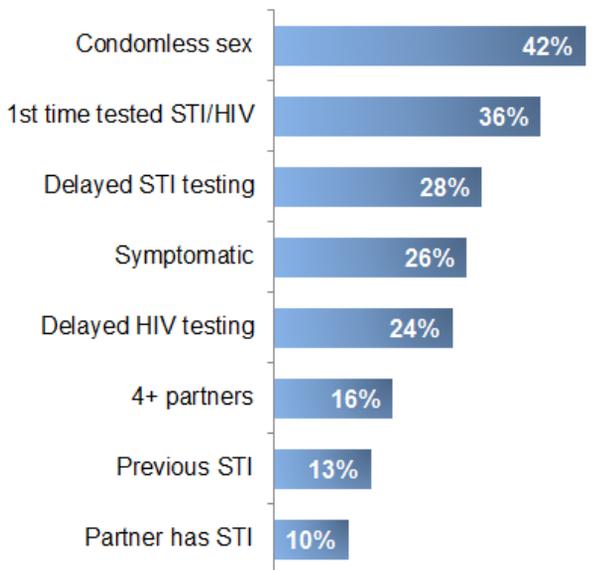
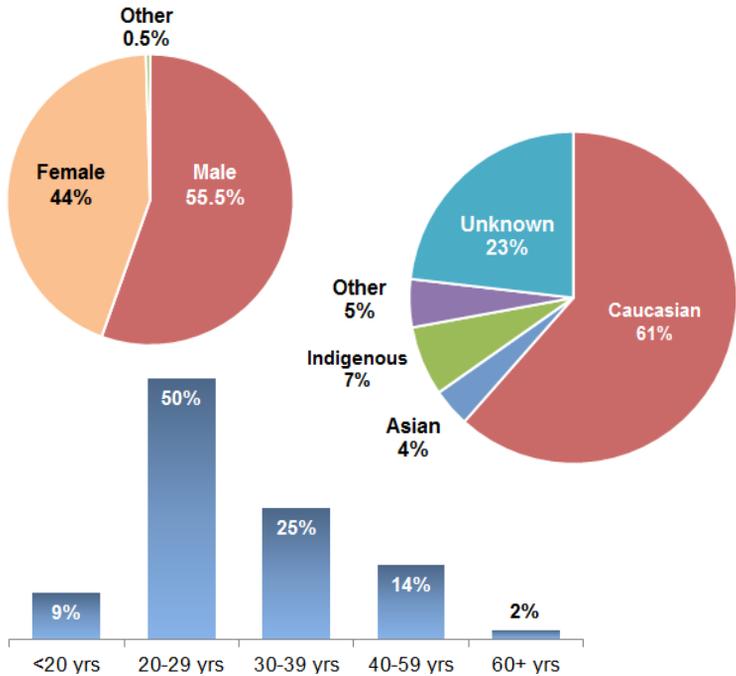
What's been the uptake of GCO in Interior Health?



15% of all people testing and 21% of all positive diagnoses were in Interior Health

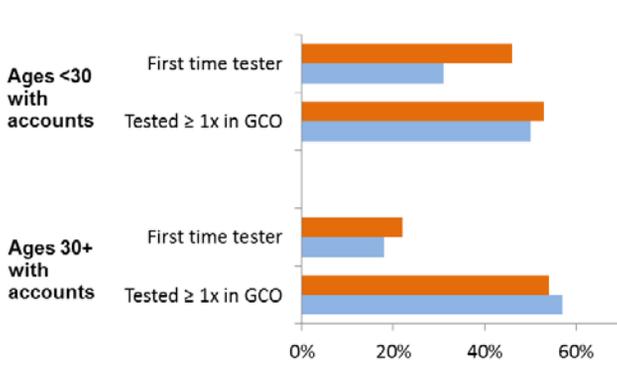


Who in Interior Health is testing through GCO?

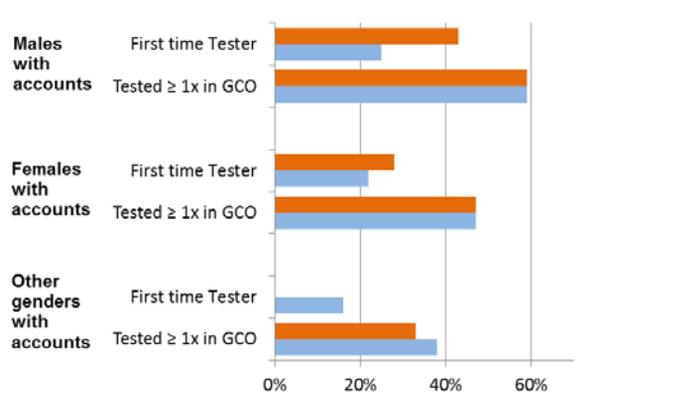


What have the impacts been?

Testing by Age Group



Testing by Gender Identity



Most people creating a GCO account are motivated to test: **40%** tested within a month of signing up

19% of GCO users tested more than once

87% of GCO users live in Thompson Cariboo Shuswap

The highest positivity rates were in youth (<25 years), women and people identifying as a non-white ethnicity

What do clients in Interior Health think of GCO? (N = 32 clients surveyed)

- ✓ **96%** would use GCO again
- ✓ **96%** would recommend GCO to others
- ✓ **94%** said it was easy / very easy to use
- ✓ **100%** agreed/strongly agreed it was convenient to test
- ✓ **100%** satisfied/very satisfied with last GCO experience

Up to **73%** had delayed or skipped testing in past year due to long wait times & needing an appointment

It was fast, easy and much more convenient than trying to see a doctor for something so routine. Results were quicker too and non "no news is good news" nonsense.

- Client, Kamloops

...I thought this would be far more convenient and with routine testing, why should I need to go to my doctor if there's another avenue available?

- Client, Kamloops