

Preventx.

The future of accessible and reliable STI testing

How end-to-end digital and lab testing empowers service users, communities, and public health



Summary

Public health directors need to meet the health challenges of their local populations, as sexually transmitted infection (STI) rates increase, budgets tighten, and the expectations of populations shift with the growth of digital channels. Integrated digital tools provide a nimble, adaptable, and affordable opportunity to reach more people, including vulnerable, at-risk populations.

Preventx, the largest provider of public remote sexual health testing and treatment in Europe,¹ enables such progress through their approach to the public health management of STIs, which integrates online channels and physical clinics. This engages more diverse populations, ensuring rapid and effective access to healthcare for all. With over 15 years' experience, more than 5.5 million kits dispatched, and 15 million tests completed,¹ Preventx holds the largest bank of remote testing data in the public health sphere and is now offering services in the US.

The net effect has been substantial STI testing volumes, STI treatment, and high rates of user satisfaction.² This paper aims to show public health decision-makers in the US how online testing can be a reliable and effective tool for tackling the rising STI rates across the country.

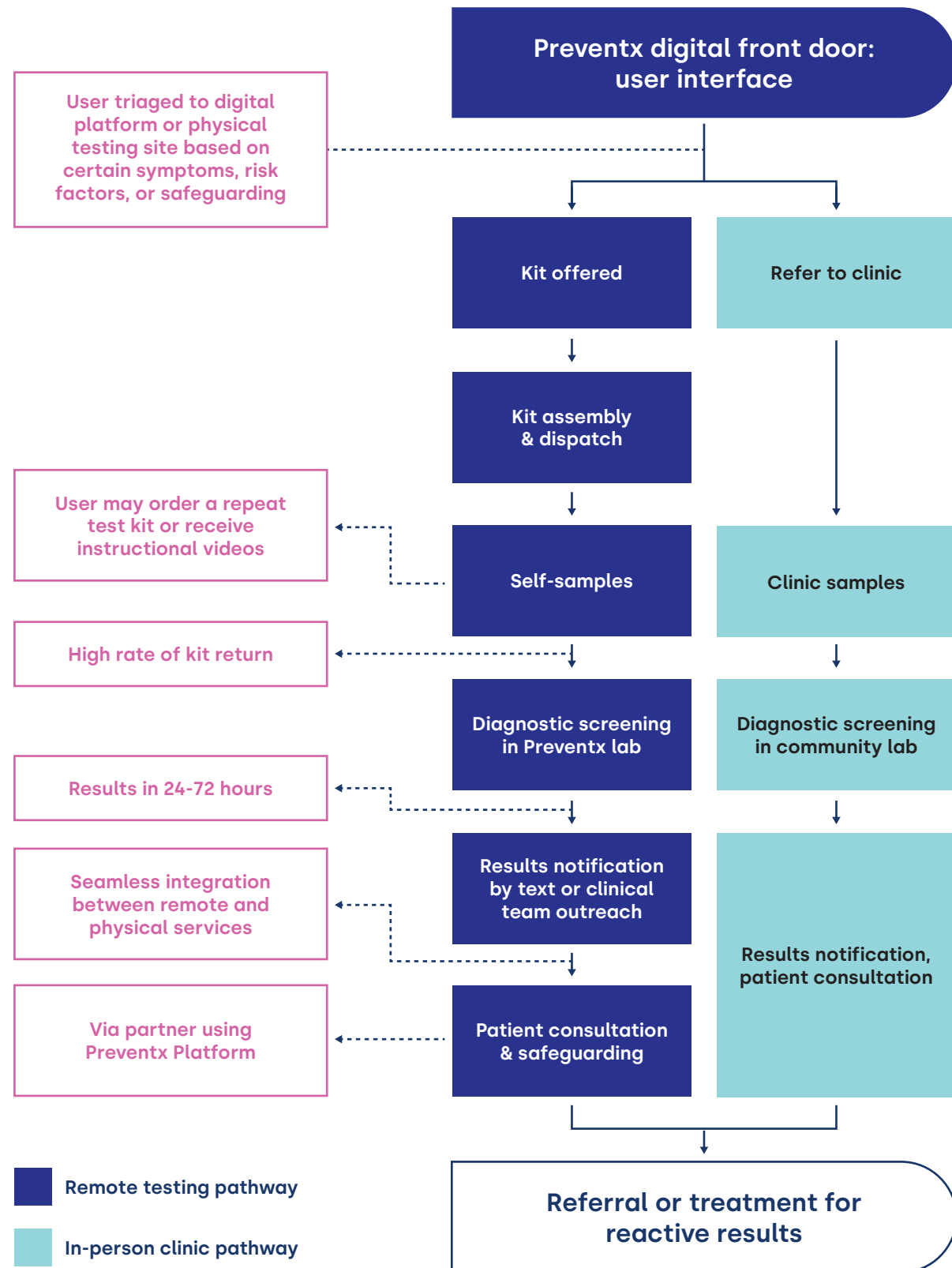
Remote testing in public health

STIs in the US are increasing at staggering rates, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).³ As a snapshot, reported cases of chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis increased between 2020 and 2021—reaching a total of more than 2.5 million reported cases.^{4,5} Syphilis cases have increased each year from 2017 through 2021, with a 32% increase from 2020 to 2021.⁵ To combat this, in part, the CDC calls for prioritizing innovation, including making STI testing more accessible through remote pathways.⁵

By engaging with local health authorities and in-person clinics, Preventx's integrated remote testing approach enables clinical teams to develop intelligent triages* that ensure users are provided with the most appropriate testing and treatment, while managing any potential risk for users and clinicians. The online platform acts as a "front door" to access digital and in-clinic services, managing all aspects of the user and clinician pathway. To ensure optimal quality and accountability, Preventx has built its own in-house laboratory, which fully integrates with Preventx's packing and dispatch systems, optimizing operational flows to ensure rapid and effective sample processing (**Fig 1**). In cases for which remote testing would be inappropriate (eg, due to certain symptoms, risk factors, or safeguarding), Preventx refers users to a local clinic or physical testing site.¹

*An online methodology that replicates a medical consultation, enabling personalization, safeguarding, and effective connection to care.

Fig 1: An integrated approach: Preventx's platform enables access to digital and in-clinic services



Increased access to those who need it most

Experience with remote testing drives acceptance and utilization

The COVID-19 pandemic saw increased acceptance of self-sampling and online testing, not only for COVID-19 but also for other infections, as people avoided in-person healthcare settings.^{1,6}

Preventx found that increased familiarity with self-sampling and online testing, coupled with the focus on user experience and accessibility, have correlated with many patients now preferring remote testing: 46% of people with symptoms state they would prefer to carry out their next STI test at home.⁷ In further support of this model, over half of service users are repeat customers, with 98% saying they would recommend it to family and friends.²

In addition, Preventx and their public sector partners are committed to normalizing STI prevention and testing; encouraging confidence in self-sampling and online testing through public health and social media campaigns.

Expanded accessibility allows more patients, including underserved populations, to be tested and treated

It is important to address the concern that a digital divide could contribute to widening sexual health inequalities. On the contrary, data shows otherwise: at-risk communities access remote testing at a high level. Preventx found a high rate of test return, and high-quality self-sampling (Fig 3).^{8,9}

Preventx can help public health efforts to reach and serve large numbers of people who do not need to be seen in clinic or who are less likely to attend in-person services for a range of reasons, including discomfort attending a clinic, scheduling difficulties, living far from a clinic, or the cost of transportation, missed work, or childcare.

At the same time, healthcare provider capacity is freed up, enabling them to attend to those with more complex needs, those for whom online testing is not an option, and those who prefer face-to-face care.

The integrated system supports timely, appropriate follow-up

For any STI testing approach to be a success, patients must be managed in a clinically appropriate way, regardless of being tested online or in-clinic. Preventx does this through the triage process and strong partnerships with local public health bodies.

The platform enables end-to-end management of patients, and also allows healthcare providers to track positive cases, provide effective linkage to care, and access epidemiological data.

Data-driven insights can inform public health strategies

The comprehensive reporting functionality gives clinical teams real-time access to their local population's health outcomes, helping them to determine the efficacy of outreach efforts and conduct local and national research. Decision-makers can use these detailed data sets to develop tailored outreach, treatment, and vaccination campaigns that target higher-risk areas or populations. The platform also facilitates automated reporting at the state or national level, to ensure mandatory requirements are met.

Fig 2: Kits ordered and returned over 22 months¹⁰
(March 2020–December 2021)

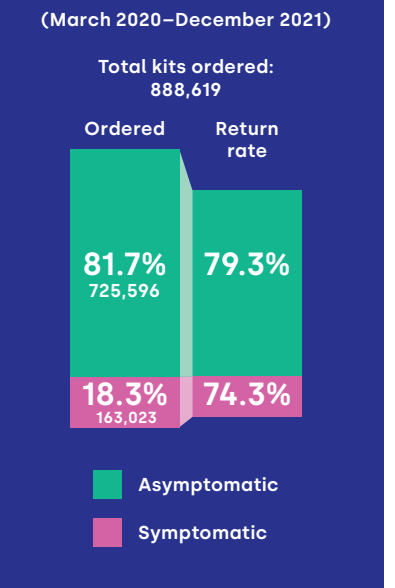
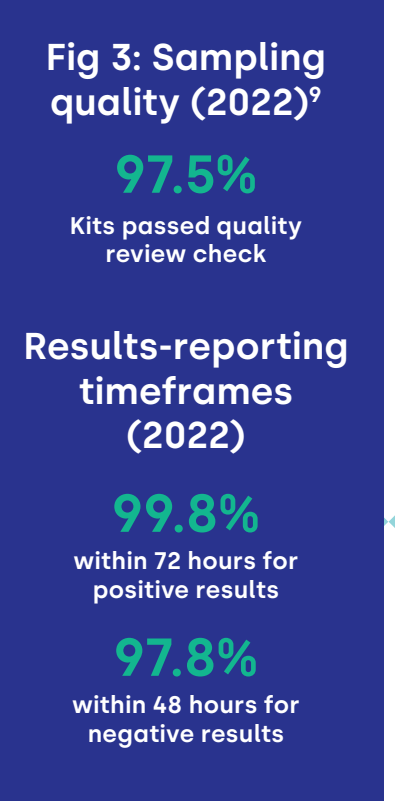


Fig 3: Sampling quality (2022)⁹



In the UK, Preventx manages the National Hepatitis C Testing Program and Sexual Health London (SHL), the world's largest publicly funded sexual health testing program.²

Between 2018 and 2023, SHL dispatched 2 million testing kits, of which 78% were returned. Service users were:

- 56% female, 43% male, and 1% trans/nonbinary or other gender minorities
- 82% heterosexual, 17% gay/bisexual
- 75% aged between 20-34yrs
- 42% from racially minoritized groups/communities
- >70% of orders from returning service users
- 6% kit orders from individuals taking PrEP

Conclusion

Preventx's innovative approach to sexual healthcare allows for the seamless connectivity of public health decision-makers, community clinics, and individuals who are increasingly accustomed to engaging in online solutions. This approach has been shown to be reliable and effective at reaching, testing, informing, and treating patients with STIs over the last 15 years.

An integrated solution combines the convenience and accessibility of digital services with the reliability and expertise of in-person clinical care. It provides the opportunity to evolve the way STI testing is conducted and address critical gaps in existing testing strategies.

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