

Facts About HIV and HIV Testing



What is the HIV test?

A health care worker takes a blood sample from your arm and sends it to a lab.

In about two weeks you get the results from the place that gave you the test.

If you are HIV positive, your body makes antibodies that fight the HIV virus. It is these antibodies that the test is looking for. When there are antibodies, the report is HIV positive.

If there are no antibodies, the test is HIV negative, for now. But, it can take up to 6 months after you get the HIV virus for antibodies to show up in your blood.

A recent chance of getting the HIV virus may mean you need to get another test in 6 months.

Talk this over with your health care worker.

Who should get the HIV test?

You should get tested if:

- You have abused drugs or alcohol.
- You have had an STD (a sexually transmitted disease).
- You have been sexually attacked.
- You have had sex without a condom, or your partner has had sex with others.
- You or your sex partner was given blood before 1985.
- You are thinking of having a baby.

You do not need the HIV test if:

- You have not had sex since 1978.
- You have had sex with only one person and you are sure that person has had sex only with you.
- You have never shared needles or had sex with anyone who shares needles.
- You were not given blood or blood products before 1985.

Why should I have the HIV test?

If there is any chance you may have the HIV virus, then you should get the test.

Just because you look healthy, does not mean you are. You may have the HIV virus and not even know it.

If you are HIV positive, medical care can help you live healthier and longer.

If you are thinking of getting pregnant, you can know the risks of passing the virus on to your baby.

If you are now pregnant, new drugs can cut the risks of passing the virus to the baby. But there is still some risk.

Taking the test is a very good idea if there is any chance you may have the HIV virus.

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What should I do with the test results?

If you test HIV negative:

- Check out the need for another test in 6 months. Ask your health care worker about this.

Then:

- Never have sex without a condom.
- Never use needles used by others.
- Get all the information you can about how to keep from getting the HIV virus.

If you test HIV positive:

- Begin special care of yourself, now.
- Get regular medical care to stay healthy.
- Don't risk passing the HIV virus on to others or getting the virus again. That means no sex without a latex condom – vaginal, oral or anal. Using a condom will also lower the risk of other STDs. If you are HIV positive, you are more likely to get these diseases.
- Ask your health care worker for other suggestions.

Remember:

If you test HIV positive, it does not mean you have AIDS. The HIV virus weakens the immune system. When that happens, your body cannot fight off infections and disease. Then, later, AIDS can result. However, there is much that can be done now and will be done in the future to give hope to those with HIV. So act on that hope to get the help you need.

How much should I tell others?

Your HIV test results are private, but they do affect others. This is a matter to talk over with your health care worker. You do not need to name your partners, but those who may also be at risk should be tested. So think carefully about this.

Can I give HIV to my family and friends?

No – not with casual contact. HIV is passed on through needles and unprotected sex. Touching or being with those with HIV will not infect others.

I feel so bad about having HIV.

Can anyone help?

Finding out you are HIV positive can cause pain, confusion and sadness. But remember, if you are HIV positive, you are not alone. There are many places where you can get help. Your health care worker will tell you about them. These services are more than medical. There are support groups that can help you with feelings and other problems. And remember, too, each day a cure comes closer. The efforts of many have already brought longer and healthier lives to those with HIV. There is information and help available through your local County Health Department or by calling the Info Connection hotline at 1-800-545-1098.

If you are HIV positive, there is hope. So act on that hope to get the help you need.

You have a future – you have a life. Give yourself the care that life deserves.



REMEMBER:

To protect yourself from getting HIV and other diseases you can get when you have sex, use a latex condom.

For Information or Help
Call 1-800-545-1098
to talk to a nurse in private.
The call is free.