

Get Tested for HIV

What's an HIV test?

It's a test that tells you if you have HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. People with HIV may have it for many years without knowing they are infected because they might not have symptoms. New drugs can help people with HIV stay healthy longer, but there is still no vaccine or cure for HIV. Getting tested for HIV is the only way to know for sure if you have the virus.

Here are three good reasons to get an HIV Test:

1. If you are infected, you can get treatment that may help you live a longer, healthier life;
2. If you are not infected, you can learn how to stay that way; and
3. The sooner you know your status, the better you will be able to protect yourself and others.

Who Should Get Tested?

You should get tested if you've ever:

- Shared needles or works to shoot drugs (even insulin or steroids);
- Shared needles for piercing or tattooing;
- Had sex (oral, vaginal, or anal) without using a latex condom; or
- Had a sexually transmitted disease (STD), including HIV, gonorrhea, herpes, syphilis, or chlamydia.

You should get tested if you are pregnant

Or are planning to get pregnant. A pregnant woman with HIV can pass HIV to her baby during pregnancy, birth, or breastfeeding. There is medicine that can reduce the chance that a woman with HIV will pass it on to her baby.

How do you get tested? It's EASY:

- You can get a blood test, or at some places, an oral HIV test which is often called a Rapid Test;
 - The results from the oral HIV test are available quickly - within 15 – 20 minutes;
 - If the test result is reactive, this means you will need another HIV test to verify the result. Most providers will follow-up with a blood test and the test result will be available within 7 – 10 days.

What do the test results mean?

- A negative result means no antibodies were found in your body. If you are negative, testing counselors can talk to you about ways to reduce your risk for contracting HIV in the future.
- If you think you've been exposed to HIV, talk to a health care provider about getting tested right away. However, you will need to come back and

get tested again 3-months after the exposure. The 3 month “window period” is typically how long it takes for a person who has been infected with HIV to test positive

- A reactive result on a rapid test must be verified with another HIV test. The second test result will be available within 7-10 days.
- A positive result means your body is making HIV antibodies – you have HIV. This doesn’t mean you have AIDS or will get sick.

If you are positive, you deserve to know. Detection and treatment of HIV can help you live a longer, healthier life. So the sooner you get tested, the sooner you can start taking care of yourself.

Who sees the results?

- You and your doctor or health care provider.
- The results are **CONFIDENTIAL**.

You can help stop the spread of HIV by getting tested and by:

- Not sharing needles, syringes, cookers, or other injection equipment;
- Not having sex. If you do have sex (oral, vaginal, or anal), use a latex condom and water-based lubricant every time, especially if you are not sure whether your partner has HIV or if one of you does have HIV;
- Ask about the sexual history of your sex partner(s) – do they have HIV, and/or another sexually transmitted disease (STD);
- Coming up with a plan to let your past and present sex and needle-sharing partners and spouse know they are at risk so they can get tested. A Health Department counselor can help you with this plan;
- Informing partners of your HIV status; and
- Encouraging friends, family and loved ones to learn more about getting tested for HIV.

There are LOTS OF PLACES to get tested. Most clinics, local health departments and doctors test for HIV. You can also check out the link for [Where to get a HIV test](#) to find FREE HIV Testing!

For additional information, contact:

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