

## How do people get HIV?

HIV is passed from one person to another by:

- **Having sexual intercourse without a condom** with someone who has HIV. This means vaginal and/or anal sex.
- **Sharing needles or syringes** with someone who has HIV.
- A woman with HIV can pass it to her baby through pregnancy, birth or breastfeeding.



## How can I protect myself and others?

- Choose to not have sex.
- Use a condom for vaginal and anal sex.
- Do not share needles or other injection equipment.
- Have sex with only one person who you know does not have HIV.
- If you are pregnant and have HIV, talk to your doctor about treatment that can reduce the risk of giving HIV to your baby.

## Are my test results confidential?

**Yes. By law, HIV test results must be held in the strictest confidence.**

Your test results will be part of your medical record so they can be used for your medical care. Even though your name is used, your test results are still private and confidential.

## Is HIV reportable?

**Yes.** If your results are positive, your doctor will carefully report your case to public health. HIV is one of 50 diseases handled this way. These include cancer, rabies, and other sexually transmitted diseases. This information is protected by law and must be treated in a private, confidential manner.

## How can I get a test without anyone knowing?

**Anonymous testing** does not link your name to your test results. This type of testing is completely private because your name is not used.

Because doctors need your test information to take care of your health, they usually do *not* offer anonymous testing. Call your local health department to find out where anonymous testing is offered.

*This pamphlet is not a substitute for medical care. If you have questions or concerns, please talk with your health care provider.*

# HIV Testing

## Patient Information



For persons with disabilities, this document is available on request in other formats. To submit a request, please call:

1-800-272-2437, or for TDD/TTY: 1-800-833-6388.

## What is HIV?

**HIV is the virus that causes AIDS.**

- HIV harms the body's immune system. This makes it hard to fight off infection.
- HIV lives in blood and body fluids (semen, vaginal fluids, and breast milk).

HIV stands for **Human Immunodeficiency Virus**.

AIDS stands for **Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome**.

## Why should I test for HIV?

**HIV is a serious illness.** Health experts recommend that everyone between 13 and 64 be tested for HIV. People who know they are infected and get health care have a much better chance of staying healthy and protecting their partners from getting HIV.

- If you have HIV, there are treatments that can help you stay healthy.
- If you have HIV, there are steps you can take to avoid passing the virus to others.
- If you have HIV and are pregnant or thinking of getting pregnant, your doctor will help you with treatment that can protect your baby.
- If you do not have HIV, there are things you can do to avoid getting it.

**Getting my test results put my mind at ease. I found out I don't have HIV and I want to stay that way.**

## What is the HIV test?

**The most common HIV test is an antibody test.** The body fights HIV by making antibodies. The test looks for these antibodies.

## When should I get a test?

**Most people have antibodies 4 weeks after getting the virus.**

This means that by four weeks an HIV test is very accurate. In rare cases, a person can take up to 3 months to produce antibodies. So, the most accurate time to have a test is 3 months from the last time you had unprotected sex or shared needles with someone who might have HIV.

**I tested positive. It was hard to hear, but my doctor helped. Now, I'm on medicines that keep me strong.**

## What do my results mean?

**Negative results** mean that HIV antibodies were not found. You are not infected with HIV.

However, the test may not show a recent infection. If you had unprotected sex or shared needles in the last 3 months, you may need to get tested again.

**Positive results** mean HIV antibodies were found. You are infected with HIV and can pass the virus to others.

## What should I do when I get my results?

**If your results are NEGATIVE:**

- Ask your doctor if you need to get another test.
- Learn how to keep from getting the virus.

**If your results are POSITIVE:**

- Talk to your doctor. Treatments can help you lead a long and healthy life.
- Take steps to make sure you don't pass HIV to others. Practice safe sex and don't share needles. If you are pregnant, take medication to protect your baby.
- Tell everyone you have sex or share needles with that you have HIV. It is important that they get a test to take care of their health. You don't have to talk to partners by yourself. Health professionals can help you. They can tell your partners for you confidentially. Ask your doctor for help.

**It is very important to get your results.**

Knowing your results can help you to take steps to protect yourself and your partners.

**An HIV test gives you power.  
Get a test today!**

If you have HIV, your doctor will help. There are treatments so you can stay healthy.

If you don't have HIV, finding out can be a relief. You can take action to stay keep from getting HIV.