

WHAT IS HIV TESTING?

SIMPLE FACT SHEET TO HELP DISPEL MYTHS AND ELIMINATE STIGMA

Everyone should know their status. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends that everyone should include an HIV test as their routine care.

The only way to know if one has HIV is to get tested. Testing takes very little time, with results produced in as little as 20 minutes. There are several options on how to get tested and many places offer low-cost or free HIV tests.

Although the CDC recommends testing to be included in routine health care, that does not mean a provider will automatically test for HIV. Check with your provider on how they do HIV testing or visit www.hivtest.org for a list of clinics, doctors offices, mobile testing sites or stores that carry at-home testing kits.

HIV testing is conducted through a finger stick, blood draw or an oral swab. An oral swab does not mean that HIV is carried in the saliva; however the test is checking for antibodies present in the cells of oral fluid.

There are two types of at-home testing kits. One is blood draw where your sample is collected and sent

to a lab. The other is an oral swab you test yourself. Both include follow-up instructions with specially licensed lab technicians and counselors.

The following methods are not effective in testing for HIV:

- Determining your status because someone you came in contact with through sex, needle sharing or blood to blood contact is negative.
- Donating blood and waiting for a call. Donated blood is tested for HIV; however it is not recommended as a source of individual testing.
- Assuming a doctor's referral to a lab for blood draw is an HIV test. You must ask.

WHAT IS HIV TESTING? cont.

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Are you at risk?

Answering the following questions can help determine if in addition to the CDC recommendation for testing, you fall into one of the high risk categories:

- Have you had sex with someone who is HIV-positive or whose status you didn't know since your last HIV test?
- Have you injected drugs (including steroids, hormones, or silicone) and shared equipment (or works, such as needles and syringes) with others?
- Have you exchanged sex for drugs or money?
- Have you been diagnosed with or sought treatment for a sexually transmitted disease, like syphilis?
- Have you been diagnosed with or sought treatment for hepatitis or tuberculosis (TB)?
- Have you had sex with someone who could answer yes to any of the above questions or someone whose history you don't know?

If you've answered yes to any of those questions, consult with your provider or find the nearest testing facility through www.hivtest.org and find out your status today.

If you test positive for HIV, there are several options for affordable treatment and no reason to not be able to live a full and healthy life. While there may not be a cure, HIV can be managed to avoid developing AIDS.