

## HIV TEST

**Who should get tested for HIV?**

Getting an HIV test is the only way to know if you have HIV. Many people have HIV but don't know it. You might not feel sick or have any health problems. But you can still pass HIV to other people. Experts recommend that everyone between the ages of 15 and 65 be tested at least once, even if they have no known risks of HIV infection. *Anyone who is sexually active should get tested regularly for HIV.* Talk to your doctor or nurse about how often you should get tested.

**When should I get tested if I think I was exposed to HIV?**

You should come in for testing right away.

**What kinds of HIV tests are there?**

Some tests look for the antibodies that your body makes against HIV. Other tests look for antibodies and part of the virus. Tests can be done on blood or fluid from your mouth. We can do rapid tests in about 20 minutes. Other tests performed at other facilities need to go to a lab.

**What do the results mean?**

A negative result could mean you don't have HIV. But it may not always be accurate. It depends on when you were exposed, when you took the test, and what kind of test you had. The window period is the time it takes for the test to turn positive after you have been exposed. If the test is done during the window period, you may get a false negative result.

**If you are infected, you can give HIV to others even if your test is negative. In fact, during this time, you have the greatest chance of passing HIV infection to others. Your doctor or nurse will help decide when you should be retested.**

A positive result means that you may have HIV. All positive results are re-checked with a second test so you can know for sure if you have it. If it is confirmed that your HIV test is positive, we will help you get the care you need.

**Who will know my test results?**

Your test results are protected by privacy laws. They can only be released with your permission. Whether anyone can know about your test results or your HIV status depends on what kind of test you take: confidential or anonymous.

- Confidential testing means that your name will be used. The results will go in your medical record and may be shared with your doctor or nurse and your health insurance company. Your results will be reported to the health department.
- With anonymous testing a code number is used instead of your name. Nothing ties your test results to you. Tell us if you want anonymous testing so that we can refer you.

