



No matter who you are, this test is for you

Did you know...? Today, more than 1.2 million people in this country have HIV. Men, women, and people of all sexual orientations, all colors, and all ages are getting infected.

How? About one in eight people with HIV don't know they have it.

So they're not getting the treatment they need. And they may be passing HIV to others without knowing it.

Testing is an important step toward staying healthy

You can protect your health with 3 important steps:

1. Get regular checkups.
2. Get tested to make sure you don't have any diseases that you don't know about, like HIV.
3. Follow your doctor's advice.

Simple, routine tests can save lives. Why?

Although some diseases don't make you feel sick right away, they can seriously hurt your health if you wait too long for treatment. High blood pressure is a good example. You can't feel it, but high blood pressure could damage your heart or cause a stroke. That's why your doctor or nurse checks your pressure at every visit.

Now an HIV test is routine too.

Like high blood pressure, HIV might not make you feel sick at first. So you might not know you have it. But if you wait too long for treatment, things could get much worse. HIV causes AIDS, which could make you more likely to get serious infections and some cancers.

Most people test "negative" for HIV.

You probably will too. This will mean that you don't have HIV. But if your test results are "positive," early HIV treatment could help you live a longer, healthier life.

Anyone could get infected with HIV

A person with HIV can look and feel healthy and still infect others.

Anyone who ever had sex without a condom might have been exposed to HIV. The same is true of anyone who ever injected drugs. Often, a person with HIV doesn't appear to be sick.

HIV affects men and women of all ages in all types of neighborhoods—even married people or those in long-term relationships.

We can't know everything about our partners. Some people don't know they have HIV. Others think they were tested when they really weren't. And partners don't always tell everything. They may have had sex with other people, or injected drugs. For these reasons, it's best for everyone to have an HIV test. Ask your partner to get tested, too.

Everyone benefits from HIV testing

No matter what, you're better off knowing if you have HIV or not.

If you find out you don't have HIV, you won't have to wonder if you ever got infected in the past. And you can make sure you don't get HIV in the future.

If your HIV test result is positive, doctors can help you.

Even if you don't feel sick, you can get regular checkups and medicine to help you live a longer, healthier life without developing AIDS. And you can take care not to pass HIV to your partner, spouse, or baby.

Knowing if you have HIV is very important if you're planning a family.

A woman with HIV can pass it to her baby during pregnancy, labor, or breastfeeding. Treatment could keep this from happening. Both women and men should be tested for their own sake, and for the sake of their future children.

What you should know about the HIV test

The test is simple. It doesn't take much time.

You have the right to say "no" to the test, but then you won't know for sure.

Only an HIV test shows if you are infected with HIV.

Other routine blood tests you get during a physical exam don't show if you have HIV. Neither do tests for other sexually transmitted diseases (such as herpes, chlamydia, or gonorrhea).

It may take up to 3 months for HIV antibodies (made by your body to fight the virus) to show up in a test.

If you get tested within 3 months after possible exposure, you could have HIV, but it may not show. During this time period, which varies from person to person, you can still pass HIV to others. If you think you may have been infected with HIV, talk to your doctor or nurse about getting an HIV test, the possible need for follow-up testing, and how to prevent transmitting HIV to others.

There are different types of HIV tests.

Ask your doctor which type you should have. These test options are

- test using blood from your vein or finger, or
- rapid test using blood from your finger or a swab of your mouth. *(You could get results the same day)*

You might not have to pay for an HIV test.

Some clinics offer testing for free. In other places, there could be a charge. Ask your doctor or nurse if you have any questions about the cost of the test.

Ask about routine health tests today ...and have an HIV test

Remember, doctors and nurses who care for you want to help you stay healthy. Everyone should be tested for HIV at least once. People who are at high risk for HIV should be tested at least once a year. Anyone who is initiating a new sexual relationship or who receives a recommendation from their doctor should be tested again for HIV.

So don't be afraid to ask questions, and please be honest with your doctor or nurse.

Glossary

- **HIV**—human immunodeficiency virus. HIV weakens the immune system and may cause AIDS. You can have HIV without getting AIDS if you get early treatment.
- **AIDS**—acquired immunodeficiency syndrome. AIDS is caused by HIV. Having AIDS means your immune system is very damaged. With AIDS, a person is more likely to get serious infections and certain types of cancer.
- **Immune System**—protects the body from illness and infection. The blood cells are part of the immune system and are most affected by HIV.

Know for sure. Get tested.

Do it for yourself and for the people you care about.

Learn more about HIV and find out where to get tested in your area

Talk with your doctor or nurse, or go online for a list of testing sites at <http://hivtest.cdc.gov>

Contact CDC-INFO at www.cdc.gov/info or by phone **800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)** (in English, en Español), Monday to Friday 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., Eastern time, closed Federal holidays. The number for callers with TTY equipment is **888-232-6348**.

Your call is free and private.

