Couples HIV Testing and Counseling Key Messages

**Pre-test Session**
- Introduce CHTC.
  - CHTC is voluntary
  - Test results are confidential
  - Declining CHTC will not affect access to other health services

**Benefits of CHTC:**
- Couples learn HIV status together, make decisions together about how to deal with HIV in the family
- Discordance is common
- Treatments are available
- Knowing status makes it easier to get better health care and protect family

**Conditions for receiving CHTC, couple agrees to:**
- Receive HIV test results together
- Make decisions about mutual disclosure together
- Discuss HIV risk issues and concerns together
- Participate equally and support each other

**Meaning of HIV test results:**
- Both tests (-) mean both do not HIV (concordant negative).
- Both tests (+) mean both have HIV (concordant positive).
- One test (+), one test (-) means one has HIV and one does not (discordant).

---

**Post-test Session:**

**Concordant Positive Couples (+ +)**
- Advise of HIV test results.
  - Both results are positive; both have HIV
- Explore couple’s reaction to results.
  - Validate feelings, acknowledge challenges
  - Ensure couple understands results
- Encourage mutual support and diffuse blame.
- Advise to access care and treatment for HIV.
  - Treatment can help people with HIV live longer and prevent HIV transmission to partners/children
  - Need to access clinic for preventive health care (e.g., cotrimoxazole)
- Discuss pregnancy status and desires.
  - If pregnant or planning pregnancy, need to speak to PMTCT provider
  - Use contraception to prevent unplanned pregnancies

**Discordant Couples (+ -)**
- Advise of HIV test results.
  - Results are different; advise HIV (+) partners of their result first
- Explore couple’s reaction to results.
  - Validate feelings, acknowledge challenges
  - Ensure couple understands results
- Review discordance.
  - Commonality of discordance
  - May not indicate partner was unfaithful; partner may have been infected before relationship began
- Encourage mutual support and diffuse blame.
- Advise to access care and treatment for HIV.
  - Treatment can help people with HIV live longer and prevent HIV transmission to partners/children
  - Need to access clinic for preventive health care (e.g., cotrimoxazole)
- Discuss pregnancy status and desires.
  - If pregnant or planning pregnancy, need to speak to PMTCT provider
  - Use contraception to prevent unplanned pregnancies
- Discuss need for re-testing HIV negative partner.
  - Because of possibility of acute HIV infection, HIV negative partner should be retested in 4 weeks
- Discuss the importance of testing their children.
  - Important to take care of the entire family
  - Children should be tested for HIV so they can get care if they are (+)
- Advise on the importance of always using condoms.
  - Assess knowledge on how to use condoms
  - Demonstrate and distribute condoms
- Discuss importance of not having unprotected sex with partners outside relationship.
  - Encourage outside partners to be tested
  - Always use condoms if have outside partners

---

**Concordant Negative Couples (- -)**
- Advise of HIV test results.
  - Both results are negative; neither has HIV
- Advise on how to remain concordant negative.
  - Use condoms every time they have sex
  - Reduce outside partners, know status of and always use condoms with any outside partners
  - For HIV (-) uncircumcised male: Medical male circumcision can protect against HIV acquisition
  - Do not drink or reduce alcohol consumption

**Discuss need for re-testing.**
- If recent exposure, re-test in 4 weeks
- If no recent exposure, re-test annually (as per national guidelines)

**Demonstrate and distribute condoms.**

**Link with follow-up services.**
- Care and treatment, PMTCT
- STIs, family planning
- Community organizations, support groups
- VCT for other partner testing, couples counseling

---

**Post-test Session:**

**Discuss importance of not having unprotected sex with partners outside of the relationship.**
- Encourage outside partners to be tested
- Always use condoms, if have outside partners

**Advise on healthy living.**
- Eliminate or reduce alcohol use
- Safe water, nutrition, malaria and TB services

**Link with follow-up services.**
- Care and treatment, PMTCT
- STIs, family planning, community support groups
- Male circumcision (if man is HIV-negative)
- VCT for other partner testing, couples counseling