

# 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 have 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 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 retesting.

- 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 as needed.

## 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

#### 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

#### 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 organizations, support groups
- VCT for other partner testing, couples counseling



## Post-test Session:

### 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 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, 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