

LET'S STOP HIV TOGETHER



No Matter Who You Are, an HIV Test Is Right for You!

The only way to know your HIV status is to get tested. This brochure answers some of the most common questions about HIV testing, including the types of tests available, where to get tested, and what to expect when you get tested.

Learn more at: cdc.gov/StopHIVTogether.



Ending
the
HIV
Epidemic

The only way to know your HIV status is to get tested. Knowing your status gives you powerful information to keep you and your partner(s) healthy.

HIV might not make you feel sick at first, so you may not know you have it. This is true of other health problems as well. For example, you can't feel high blood pressure, but it can damage your heart or cause a stroke. That's why your health care provider regularly checks your blood pressure.

Like routine blood pressure checks, routine HIV testing helps your provider figure out the best prevention or treatment options for you.



Should I Get Tested for HIV?

People just like you get tested for HIV every day.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends everyone between the ages of 13 and 64 get tested for HIV at least once.

- ◆ People at ongoing risk should get tested more often. If you were HIV negative the last time you were tested, the test was more than 1 year ago, and you can answer yes to any of the following questions, then you should get an HIV test as soon as possible:
 - Are you a man who has had sex with another man?
 - Have you had sex—anal or vaginal—with a partner who has HIV?
 - Have you had more than one sex partner since your last HIV test?
 - Have you injected drugs and shared needles, syringes, or other drug injection equipment (for example, cookers) with others?
 - Have you exchanged sex for drugs or money?
 - Have you been diagnosed with or treated for another sexually transmitted disease?
 - Have you been diagnosed with or treated for hepatitis or tuberculosis?
 - Have you had sex with someone who could answer yes to any of the above questions or someone whose sexual history you don't know?
- You should be tested at least once a year if you keep doing any of these things. Sexually active gay and bisexual men may benefit from more frequent testing (for example, every 3 to 6 months).
- ◆ If you're pregnant, talk to your health care provider about getting tested for HIV and other ways to protect you and your baby from getting HIV.

How Does Taking an HIV Test Help Me?

Knowing your HIV status gives you powerful information to keep you and your partner(s) healthy.

- ◆ If you test positive, you can take medicine to treat HIV. Taking HIV medicine as prescribed can make the amount of HIV in your blood (your viral load) very low—so low that a test can't detect it. This is called an undetectable viral load. Getting and keeping an undetectable viral load is the best thing you can do to stay healthy. If your viral load stays undetectable, you have **effectively no risk** of transmitting HIV to an HIV-negative partner through sex.
- ◆ If you test negative, there are more HIV prevention tools available today than ever before. To learn more, visit: [cdc.gov/StopHIVTogether/prevention](https://www.cdc.gov/StopHIVTogether/prevention).

Before having sex for the first time with a new partner, you and your partner should talk about your sexual and drug-use history, disclose your HIV status, and consider getting tested for HIV and learning the results.



I Don't Believe I Am at Risk. Why Should I Get Tested?

CDC recommends that everyone between the ages of 13 and 64 get tested for HIV at least once as part of routine health care, and more often if you do things that might increase your risk for getting HIV.

CDC's HIV Risk Reduction Tool shows the HIV risk of various sexual activities when one partner has HIV and the other doesn't. It also provides tailored information to help understand your risk for getting HIV and how to reduce it. To access the tool, visit: hivrisk.cdc.gov.

Even if you are in a monogamous relationship (both you and your partner are having sex only with each other), you should find out for sure whether you or your partner has HIV.



I'm Pregnant. Why Should I Get Tested?

If you are pregnant, you should be tested for HIV so that you can begin treatment if you test positive for HIV.

- ◆ If a person is treated for HIV early in their pregnancy, the risk of transmitting HIV to their baby is extremely low (1% or less).
- ◆ Testing people who are pregnant for HIV infection and treating those who have HIV has led to a huge decline in the number of children born with HIV.
- ◆ Treatment is most effective when started as early as possible during a pregnancy. However, there are still great health benefits to beginning treatment to prevent HIV transmission during labor or shortly after the baby is born.

How Do I Talk to My Health Care Provider About Getting Tested for HIV?

Knowing your HIV status can make all the difference. Talk with your health care provider about why an HIV test is right for you.

Here are some tips that can help you start the conversation.

- ◆ **Share with your health care provider that you are interested in taking an HIV test** and ask them which test may be right for you.
- ◆ **Be honest.** It can be difficult to talk about certain things, like your sex life or drug use. But it is important to share details about your life that could be important to your health. If there are subjects you are uncomfortable discussing, share that with your health care provider.
- ◆ **Ask your health care provider which behaviors may increase your risk for HIV.** By understanding the factors that can increase your risk for HIV, you can choose to do things to help you decrease HIV risk and stay healthy.

What Should I Expect When I Go in for an HIV Test?

If you get a test in a health care setting or lab, a health care provider or lab technician will take your sample (blood or oral fluid). If it's a rapid test, you may be able to wait for the results, but if it's a laboratory test, it can take several days for your results to be available.

Your health care provider or counselor may talk with you about your risk factors, answer any questions you might have, and discuss next steps with you, especially if your result is positive.

- ◆ If the test comes back negative, and you haven't had a possible exposure during the window period for the test you took, you can be confident you don't have HIV.
- ◆ If your test result is positive, the lab will conduct follow-up testing.

If you are tested outside of a health care setting or a lab, you will likely receive a rapid test (oral fluid or finger stick).

- ◆ If the test comes back negative, and you haven't had a possible exposure during the previous 3 months, you can be confident you don't have HIV.
- ◆ If your test result is positive, you should go to a health care provider to get follow-up testing.
- ◆ If a counselor provided the test, they should be able to answer questions and provide referrals for follow-up testing as well.

Where Can I Get Tested?

You can ask your health care provider for an HIV test. Many medical clinics, substance use programs, community health centers, and hospitals offer them too. You can learn more about HIV testing and find free, fast, and confidential HIV testing near you by:

- ◆ Using the HIV Service Locator on the CDC *Let's Stop HIV Together* website: cdc.gov/StopHIVTogether/locator.
- ◆ Visiting gettested.cdc.gov.
- ◆ Calling 1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636).

Can I Get an HIV Test to Use at Home or in a Private Location?











Yes. These are known as HIV self-tests. There are two kinds:

- ◆ A **Rapid Self-Test** is done entirely at home or in a private location and can produce results within 20 minutes. You can buy a rapid self-test kit at a pharmacy or online at the website below. The only rapid self-test currently available in the United States is an oral fluid test. To learn more, visit: oraquick.com.
- ◆ A **Mail-In Self-Test** includes a specimen collection kit that contains supplies to collect dried blood from a finger stick at home. The sample is then sent to a lab for testing, and the results are provided by a health care provider. Mail-in self-tests can be ordered through various online merchant sites. Your health care provider can also order a mail-in self-test for you.

Check to see if the health department or another organization near you is providing a rapid self-test for a reduced cost or for free. Directly purchased self-tests may not be covered by private health insurance or Medicaid. Be sure to check with your insurance provider and your health care provider about reimbursement for tests that are self-purchased.

Which HIV Self-Test Is Right for You?

HIV self-testing allows you to take an HIV test at home or other private location. There are two kinds of HIV self-tests: rapid and mail-in. Learn the differences and which may be right for you.

	Rapid Self-Test	Mail-In Self-Test
 Can I order it myself?	●	●
 Can my health care provider order it for me?	▲	●
 Is it available at a pharmacy?	●	▲
 Can it be ordered online?	●	●
 Does it offer quick results?	●	▲
 Can it find HIV soon after exposure?	■	●
 Does it use an oral swab?	●	▲
 Does it use a small blood spot from a finger-stick?	▲	●
 Is it covered by my insurance?	■	■
 Is it covered by Health Savings Accounts and Flexible Spending Accounts?	■	■

For more information, visit: [cdc.gov/hiv/basics](https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/basics). ● Yes ■ Sometimes ▲ No

A female doctor with dark hair and glasses is smiling and looking towards a male patient whose profile is visible on the left. The doctor is wearing a white lab coat over a pink shirt. The background is bright and out of focus.

You can also access this information by calling
CDC-INFO at **800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636)**.

LEARN MORE AT
[CDC.GOV/STOPHIVTOGETHER](https://www.cdc.gov/stopshivtogether)



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