

# HIV TESTING

Testing for HIV is the only way to know if you have an HIV infection.

Get all the facts about HIV testing from this fact sheet.

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References: [www.avert.org/fact-sheet-hiv-testing.htm](http://www.avert.org/fact-sheet-hiv-testing.htm)

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## How to test for HIV

HIV testing is available from a variety of healthcare providers.

They take one of the following:



blood sample



oral fluid sample

## When should I get an HIV test?

Anyone can have an HIV test. Everyone should know their HIV status. Take a test if you are...



pregnant



breastfeeding



not always using condoms



sharing needles & syringes

## Know your status. Get your test results

The time between testing and getting the results changes depending on the type of test.



Rapid test results are ready in 30 minutes or less.



Laboratory test results can take much longer, up to a few weeks in some places.

## If you test HIV-positive

HIV has been detected in your body



Get the facts about living with HIV.



Find out if you need to begin treatment.



Get advice and support.



Protect sexual partners.



If pregnant, access services to prevent transmission to your baby.



Take precautions if living or travelling in places with high TB prevalence.

## If you test HIV-negative

You do not have HIV



Get the facts about staying negative.



Protect yourself during sex.



Never share needles and syringes.



Have regular HIV and sexually transmitted infection (STI) tests.

# HIV window period

What is the HIV window period?

It refers to the weeks following exposure to HIV when an HIV test may not detect infection.

How long is the HIV window period?

It can be between 2 weeks and 3 months, depending on the individual and the type of test used.



## After an HIV test



A confirmatory test confirms that your HIV test result is correct, but some tests need a second fluid specimen.



If you get an HIV test during the window period - a negative result is only reliable if it is 3 months after possible exposure to HIV.



If you have unprotected sex or share needles & syringes again, test again.



Modern HIV tests are very accurate at detecting HIV infection.



An HIV-negative test result 6 months after you were last exposed is final.



Waiting for results can cause you anxiety. [AVERT.org](#) can give you advice and information.

# Types of HIV test



## Antibody Test

Detects HIV antibodies in blood. Most common diagnosis tool.



## Antigen Test or P24

Detects HIV proteins in blood.



## Fourth Generation Test

Detects HIV antibodies and HIV proteins in blood.



## HIV RNA Test

Detects genetic material of HIV in blood. Rarely used as a diagnosis tool.

## Where to get an HIV test

HIV testing is available at many healthcare clinics, hospitals and sexual health clinics.

Free HIV testing is widely available in many countries. If not, then the cost of an HIV test depends on your clinic and location.

Find where to get an HIV test with [NAM's e-atlas](#).

## Know your rights

You have the right to:



request an HIV test



refuse an HIV test if you feel forced into it



test confidentially. Test results should never be shared without your consent.