

Taking the HIV (AIDS)

TEST

How to Help Yourself

Should You Have the HIV Test?

This booklet talks about testing for HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. If you should take the test to know if you have HIV, (sometimes called the AIDS test), answer these questions.

Have you --

- had sex without knowing **for sure if the person or persons you had sex with do not have HIV?**
- had sex with someone you know has HIV or AIDS?
- had a disease passed on by sex, like genital herpes or syphilis? (Having these diseases makes it easier to get HIV.)
- had sex with many men or women or had sex with someone who has had sex with many men or women?
- had sex with someone who has used needles to take drugs?
- shared needles or works to take drugs?



If you have answered "yes" to any of these questions, you should think about having the HIV test.

How HIV Testing Can Help You



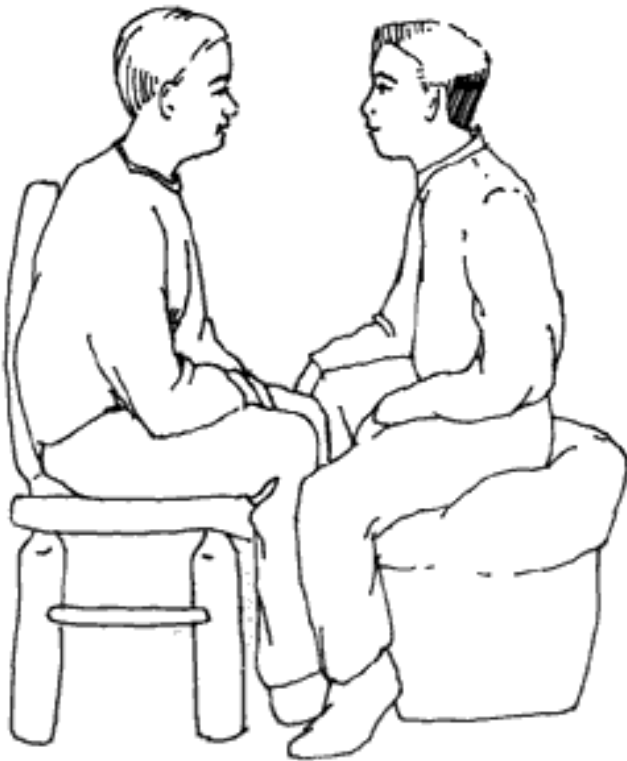
If tests show you don't have HIV, you can learn how to stay HIV-free. (Someone who does not have HIV is called HIV-negative.)

If tests show you do have HIV, you can get medical care right away to help you:

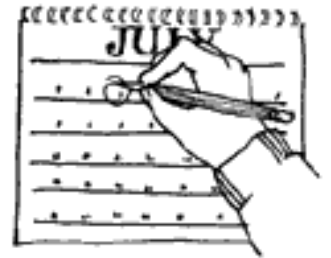
- Stay healthy longer
- Avoid getting some illnesses caused by HIV
- Get early treatment for illnesses that do occur

Testing is the only way to know if you have HIV--and testing is the first step to getting medical care, counseling, and support if you need it.

Before You Take the Test



Taking the HIV test can help you, but it is a big step. You should think about how having HIV could affect your life. These steps can help you prepare to take the test.



1. **Consider telling someone you trust that you are having the HIV test.**
Support of a family member or friend can mean a lot.
2. **Find out how private your test results will be.**
Ask the clinic if anyone but you can learn your test results.
3. **Set a time to get your results.**
Don't put it off. The test can only help you when you find out what it shows.

How the HIV Test Works

The HIV test shows if you have signs in your blood of the virus that causes AIDS. HIV testing has four steps.

1. **You go to the clinic or doctor's office. A nurse or counselor tells you about the test. You can ask questions and talk about your fears and concerns.**
2. **You decide to have the test. A nurse or aide takes some blood from your arm using a needle.**
3. **Your blood is tested for signs of HIV. If the first test (called ELISA) is positive (shows signs of HIV), the blood will be tested again. If the second test is positive, another kind of test (called a Western blot) will be done to confirm the result.**
4. **Test results come back to the clinic. A nurse or counselor tells you when to come in, what the results mean, and how to help yourself.**



To Find Out More



To learn more about HIV and where to get the test in your city or town, call:

- **1-800-342-AIDS**
(1-800-342-2437)
- **Your local health department**

People at these numbers can answer your questions about HIV. They can also send you booklets that have more information.

REMEMBER: If the HIV test is positive, it will mean that you have the HIV virus that causes AIDS. It will mean you can get medical care and support services to help you if you need them.

