

- Although oral sex is considered low risk for HIV transmission, there have been a very small number of people who became infected with HIV through unprotected oral sex (mouth to vagina or mouth on penis). The risk is greater if there are cuts or sores on the mouth, penis or vagina.

“Anonymous Testing or Confidential Testing? What’s best for me?”

- **Anonymous testing** uses a number or a code on your lab slip instead of your name. Only you will know your test result, or even that you were tested. Anonymous testing is only available at selected health clinics. Anonymous tests are not done by family physicians. To find out the location of your nearest anonymous testing site, contact the AIDS-Sexual Health InfoLine at 416-392-2437 (outside Toronto 1-800-668-2437).
- **Confidential testing** means your test result will appear in your medical record. Only you and your physician will know this information. In rare instances legal authority could be used to access your medical record.

“What if I am asked to take the test for employment or insurance reasons?”

In this case you may first want an anonymous test done. If your anonymous test result is positive, you may choose to withdraw your employment or insurance application to protect your confidentiality.

For more information about HIV antibody testing, or for the location of your nearest anonymous testing site, call the AIDS-Sexual Health InfoLine at 416-392-2437 (outside Toronto 1-800-668-2437).

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THE HIV ANTIBODY TEST



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This brochure is designed to help answer questions you may have if you are thinking about taking the HIV antibody test. HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus and is the virus that causes AIDS.

This brochure is not a substitute for counselling before and after you take the test. Before you decide to take the test, you may want to talk to someone who can answer your questions and concerns about the testing process. The AIDS- Sexual Health InfoLine at 416-392-2437 (outside Toronto 1-800-668-2437) can help you.

WHY TAKE THE TEST?

There is no easy answer to this question. For some people testing is important because they want to know whether they are infected or not. They may also want to know their HIV status so that they can take additional steps to remain healthy.

Other people do not want to know their HIV status. They may not want to deal with the possibility of being infected with HIV. Only you can decide if the time is right to get tested. To make that decision, it is helpful to have a clear understanding of what the test is and what the result means.

HOW IS THE TEST DONE?

You may have heard this test referred to as an "AIDS test" or an "HIV test." In fact, it is a test for HIV antibodies which are produced by the body as a reaction to being infected with the virus. A sample of your blood is sent to a lab to be tested for the presence of HIV antibodies. It usually takes two to three weeks for the test result to come back.

If you become infected with HIV, antibodies can take up to 12 weeks to appear in your blood. Since the test looks for antibodies and not HIV, you need to wait until antibodies are made by your body. Therefore, before being tested, you must wait at least 12 weeks after possible exposure to HIV. This 12 week period of time is often called the window period.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE TEST RESULTS?

A positive test result means that you have been infected with HIV and you can pass the virus on to others. It does not mean that you have AIDS or that you will develop AIDS. It does not tell you anything else about the state of your health. You can be infected but have no symptoms for many years.

A negative test result means that there were no HIV antibodies in your blood at the time of your test. It does not mean that you are immune to the virus or that you cannot become infected in the future.

WHAT CAN I DO IF I TEST HIV POSITIVE?

A health care provider who is knowledgeable about HIV can monitor your health and help you decide what treatments are best for you. Your health care provider can also discuss with you how important it is to protect yourself from infection with other strains of HIV or other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) which can further weaken your immune system. If you don't know who to see, contact your local AIDS organization or call the AIDS-Sexual Health InfoLine at 416-392-2437 (outside Toronto 1-800-668-2437) for health care provider information.

BEFORE TESTING...SOME QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

"How could I have been infected with HIV?"

- **Vaginal or anal intercourse without a condom.**
- **Sharing needles** while: injecting drugs or steroids, getting a tattoo or body piercing.
- **Sharing sex toys.**
- **From a woman to her child** during pregnancy, birth or breastfeeding.
- **Through blood transfusions** before screening of the blood supply began in late 1985.