

Reduce the Risk



- ◆ Abstinence = Don't have sex at all.
- ◆ Use a condom every time you have sex (anal, vaginal, or oral).
- ◆ Only have sex if you are in a mutually monogamous relationship and you both test negative for HIV.
- ◆ Don't inject illicit drugs (those not prescribed by your doctor).
- ◆ If you do inject drugs, never share needles, syringes or other "works."



Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration

Office of Public Health
and Environmental Hazards

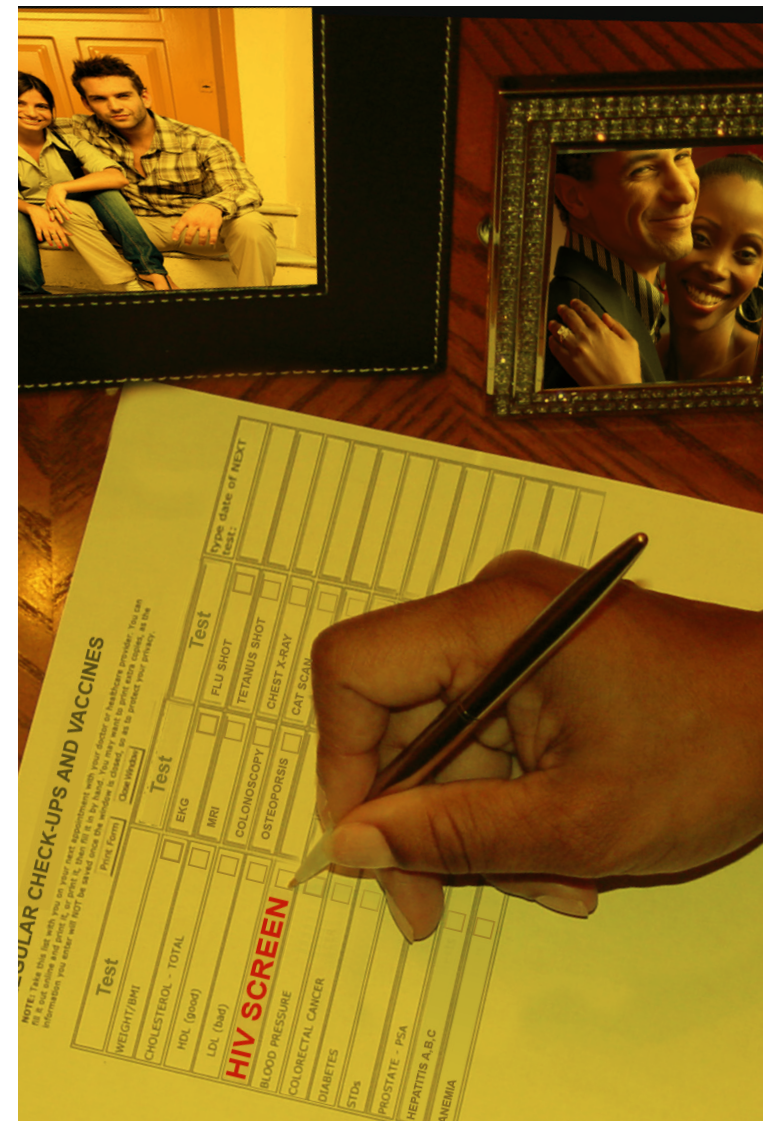
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www.hiv.va.gov

Patient Guide to HIV Testing
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GET CHECKED

just to be sure...

The Facts about HIV

What is HIV?

- ◆ Human Immunodeficiency Virus, the virus that causes AIDS.
- ◆ HIV weakens the immune system to the point that a person can get serious infections or cancers—this is called AIDS.
- ◆ People infected with HIV may have no symptoms for many years.
- ◆ Even without symptoms damage to the immune system happens and infected people can still pass the virus on to others.

Who is at Risk for HIV?

- ◆ Anyone who has had sex (vaginal, anal or oral) with someone (male or female) should consider having an HIV test.
- ◆ Sharing needles to inject drugs/steroids or for tattooing/piercing.
- ◆ Having sex with an injection drug user.
- ◆ Being a victim of sexual assault.
- ◆ Having a sexually transmitted disease (STD), such as syphilis.



www.hiv.va.gov

PHSHG Public Health
Strategic Health Care Group

Be Smart: Get Tested

Testing Information

Should I get an HIV test?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that all adults should be tested for HIV as part of their routine medical care. The VA agrees that HIV testing should be a part of routine medical care—even for those Veterans who do not think they have risk factors. Like many other diseases, it is better to diagnose and treat HIV early, rather than late. Today, we are fortunate that there are many effective treatments to offer persons who are found to be infected with HIV.

Does testing need to be performed in a VA facility?

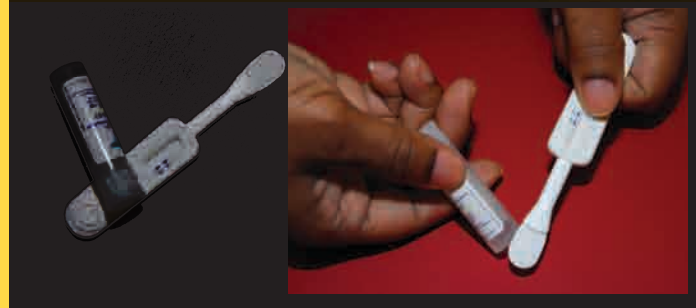
- ◆ You can have an HIV test done outside of VA.
- ◆ All costs associated with testing performed outside of a VA facility will be the Veterans responsibility.
- ◆ In some places, you can get an HIV test done without giving your name.



What do the HIV test results mean?

Positive: The result means that you have an HIV infection and you can pass it to others.

Negative: The result means either you do not have HIV or got it so recently that your body has not had time to make enough antibodies to be seen by the test. Your provider may recommend repeating the test in 3-6 months if you have recently been engaging in risky behavior.



Rapid Tests require special handling and not every VA medical center or clinic offers them.



Your Benefits and HIV

Can having an HIV test affect my VA Benefits?

You will NOT be tested without your consent or knowledge. You always have the right to refuse HIV testing without losing medical benefits or any right to care.

All HIV Test results are kept private: VA will not give your HIV test results to anyone except providers unless you have given written permission except in the following special situations:

- ◆ In case of an accidental needle-stick of a VA health care provider
- ◆ For additional benefits
- ◆ In case of an emergency, if the information is required to provide you with medical care
- ◆ For reporting to public health authorities
- ◆ If ordered by a court of law
- ◆ If the Department of Defense or Congress requests it (your name will not be used)
- ◆ For VA-approved scientific research (your name will not be used)
- ◆ If you tell a VA provider that you've had unprotected sex with someone and will not tell that individual.

How do HIV tests work?

The screening test (Enzyme Immunoassay or EIA) for HIV looks for antibodies to the virus in either your blood or oral fluid.

A positive (reactive EIA) must be followed up with a confirmatory test, called a Western Blot, to make the diagnosis. The Western Blot is done on blood drawn from a vein.

Traditional Blood Test: The blood test is taken from the arm or finger with a needle stick. Results can take up to 1-2 weeks.

Rapid Tests: Rapid tests use blood from a finger stick or oral fluid to look for the presence of antibodies to HIV. Results are available in 20 minutes. A negative result does not need to be confirmed. Positive PRELIMINARY results must be confirmed by a traditional blood test, and getting those results can take 1-2 weeks.

**Take the test,
Take Control!**

