HIV TESTING PATIENT FAQS

20 COMMON QUESTIONS PATIENTS ASK AND SUGGESTED ANSWERS

Routine HIV testing is new, which will likely lead to your patients having questions. Providers can use these sample questions and answers to help address concerns patients may have. Being comfortable discussing HIV with patients and answering questions can lead to better patient outcomes.

1 WHY ARE YOU OFFERING ME AN HIV TEST?

We now offer all our patients an HIV test as a routine part of medical care.
It is important for all people to know their HIV status to stay healthy.

2 DO I HAVE TO BE TESTED FOR HIV?

You can opt out of being tested for HIV if you choose.

3 WHAT HAPPENS IF I TEST POSITIVE FOR HIV?

You will be given support and connected to medical care right away because people who have HIV and get treatment can live long, healthy lives and prevent spreading HIV to others.

4 WHAT HAPPENS IF I TEST NEGATIVE FOR HIV?

Depending on your last exposure, you may be advised to schedule another test three months from your last exposure.
You will be given information about prevention options including Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP); and materials such as internal or external condoms.

5 HOW OFTEN SHOULD I GET TESTED FOR HIV?

It is recommended that all people get tested at least once, but more often if you engage in condomless sex or needle sharing.

6 HOW DO I KNOW IF I AM AT RISK FOR HIV?

HIV is passed through the blood or sexual fluids of a person who has the virus. If you have had condomless sex or shared needles for drug use, you may have been put at risk.

7 WHY TEST ME IF I HAVE NO RISK FACTORS OR SYMPTOMS?

Some people do not know they were put at risk and HIV can stay in the body a long time before people know they have it.
Some people have no signs or symptoms of HIV, so a test is the only way to know for sure if someone has HIV.

8 WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF HIV?

If people get symptoms, they tend to be the same as the common flu (fever, chills, night sweats, muscle aches, sore throat, fatigue, swollen glands, etc.). Patients with advanced HIV infection may have more severe symptoms impacting lung or brain function.

9 HOW DOES THE HIV TEST WORK?

HIV tests can be run with your other routine bloodwork or on a rapid point of care test with a simple fingerstick.

10 DOES GETTING AN HIV TEST HURT?

With a blood draw or fingerstick you will feel a pinch as the sample is taken.

(continued on reverse)

> “I am healthier because I know my HIV status.”
>
> **- Danielle Warren-Diaz**
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> Person with Lived Experience working in HIV field

HIV TESTING PATIENT FAQS (continued)

11 HOW ACCURATE ARE HIV TESTS?

HIV tests are 99.9% accurate. However, the window period must be considered.

12 WHAT IS THE WINDOW PERIOD?

The time it takes for HIV to show up on a test after exposure. Most infections will show up within weeks, however the window period is 3-6 months.

13 WHEN AND HOW WILL I GET MY RESULTS?

Point-of-Care fingerstick tests yield preliminary results in 20 minutes or less, and you will get your results the same day.
Results from bloodwork can take longer to come back and you will be notified when results are available.

14 HOW MUCH WILL THIS COST?

In most cases, HIV tests are covered by insurance or free. Ask your doctor or insurance if you have a concern.

15 WHAT CAN I DO TO PROTECT MYSELF AND OTHERS?

Get tested for HIV to know your status.
Discuss prevention options with partners; and/or use internal or external condoms or PrEP.
Do not share equipment for drug use.



16 WHAT IS PrEP?

PrEP stands for Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis which are HIV medications that HIV negative people can take to prevent getting HIV if exposed.

17 HOW DO I KNOW IF PrEP IS RIGHT FOR ME?

You may want to consider PrEP if:
you have repeated high-risk activity or exposure to someone who has unmanaged HIV; and you can commit to taking medication and being seen by a physician regularly for follow-up testing.

18 I WAS JUST EXPOSED TO HIV. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

HIV cannot be detected immediately after exposure. If you were exposed in the last 72 hours, you can get PEP or Post-Exposure Prophylaxis. These are HIV medications that can prevent the virus from taking hold in your body. PEP can be given by a provider familiar with the process.

19 WHO WILL YOU SHARE MY RESULTS WITH?

Negative results are kept in your patient record and are not reportable to anyone, at this time. Positive results must be reported to the state health department, however that information is kept secure and is not shared with anyone.

20 WHO SHOULD I SHARE MY RESULT WITH?

Anyone you trust to support you, including a partner(s), family member, friend, counselor, etc., but especially sexual partners and anyone with whom you shared needles.