

HIV PRE-TEST INFORMATION FACT SHEET

**Anyone requesting HIV testing must read this information.
If you have any questions about the information, please ask.**

What is HIV?

HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is the virus that causes AIDS. This virus attacks the body's immune system, lowering its ability to fight disease.

How can a person become infected by the virus?

HIV is found in blood, semen, vaginal, and anal fluids as well as breast milk and is spread by:

- Anal, vaginal, or oral sex without a condom. Oral sex is considered low risk for HIV transmission but oral sex can put you at risk for chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis and herpes.
- Sharing sex toys.
- Sharing drug equipment, needles and/or syringes.
- Sharing unsterile/used equipment for tattooing, electrolysis, ear/body piercing, acupuncture.
- An infected mother to her baby during pregnancy, childbirth, and through breastfeeding.

HIV cannot be passed through casual contact such as hugging or kissing.

What are the benefits of testing?

- To know if you have HIV.
- To protect yourself and others from exposure to HIV.
- To receive accurate information, support, and referral to medical care.

There is no cure however HIV is now a treatable long term condition.

When can HIV be detected?

- HIV is detected by a blood test.
- It can take up to 12 weeks for HIV antibodies to show up in the blood.
- Test results may not be accurate until 12 weeks after you have been exposed.
- This 12 week timeframe is called the window period.

What types of testing are available?

Nominal testing:

- Testing is done using your full name and date of birth.

Anonymous testing:

- Testing is done using an anonymous code, and date of birth.
- The only way to link this testing to you is by the code number.

How do we test for HIV?

Standard blood test:

- Blood test is done using blood taken from your arm.
- Call the clinic to get your results. A nurse may contact you or talk to you when you call in so the test results can be explained to you.
- If you test anonymously you must provide your anonymous code number.

Rapid Test (also known as Point of Care or POC):

Only people with specific risk factors will be offered a POC test.

- The rapid HIV screening test is done with a drop of blood from a finger prick.

For further information, talk to your health care professional, call Peel Public Health at 905-799-7700 or visit peelsexualhealth.ca

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- Results are available the same day you test.
- A blood test is required to confirm a reactive POC result.

What if the test is positive?

- A positive test means that you have the HIV virus.
- It does not mean you have AIDS. No one knows when and if someone infected with HIV will develop AIDS.
- If you test positive, the Public Health Department will be notified because HIV is a reportable infection.

How to prevent getting HIV

- Use condoms. When used correctly and consistently condoms, lubricant and dental dams reduce HIV transmission.
- Get tested for sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Having an STI like chlamydia, gonorrhea or syphilis can weaken your body's natural protection and increase your chances of becoming infected with HIV if you are exposed to the virus.
- Use sterile needles and do not share drug equipment.
- Ask your sexual partners to get tested. Ask if they were tested outside the window period and what the test results were.

Male condoms should be made of latex (or polyurethane if allergic to latex) to help prevent STIs, HIV and hepatitis.

Healthy Sexuality Clinics have free condoms, dental dams and needle exchange programs.

For more HIV information:

Canadian Aids Treatment Information Exchange (CATIE)
www.catie.ca

AIDS and Sexual Health Information Line
1-800-668-2437
(multi-lingual services)

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