



HIV Drug Resistance Testing

INFORMATION FOR CLIENTS

People testing positive for HIV for the first time may get a free HIV drug resistance test. If you were diagnosed with HIV infection a long time ago, or if there is not enough blood leftover after your HIV test, or if you have very little virus in your blood, you may not receive a resistance test.

This information sheet will help answer your questions about HIV drug resistance testing.

What is HIV drug resistance?

Sometimes when a person takes medicine or drugs prescribed by a doctor for HIV, the HIV virus can change to become resistant to those medicines. If this happens, the medicines may not work as well to treat that virus. This HIV virus is said to be resistant.

How do we know if HIV is resistant?

Doctors have two different types of blood tests to look for drug resistance in HIV. These tests are done at special laboratories looking for resistance. Doctors use these tests in HIV clinics to help pick the right medicines for fighting off the type of HIV in a person's blood.

How can a person be infected with resistant HIV before taking HIV medicines?

If the person who gave you HIV had HIV drug resistance, that resistance can be passed to you.

How is the test done?

The test is done on the same blood you give for your HIV test. We put a code number (not your name or medical chart number) and send some of the leftover blood to a special laboratory to test for resistance.

Why is it important to do resistance testing on the blood from your HIV test?

We are testing the same blood used for your HIV test. The test happens as soon as you test positive for HIV so your doctor can know your results in a few weeks. Your doctor can use the test results to pick the best drugs to treat your HIV.

Most people do not have a resistant form of HIV when they first find out they have HIV so doctors rarely order the test for new HIV patients. Another reason is that these tests cost a lot of money (as much as \$1,200 dollars). Resistance testing provided free by Public Health can allow doctors to have your results in a few weeks. If you are a person with a resistant type of HIV and your doctor waited to do the test, it might not show the resistance. You could have a resistant type of HIV and not know that some drugs may not work very well.

Doing the test close to the time you got HIV has the best chance of finding your resistant type of HIV. This means you may need different kinds of medicines. The fastest way to know is to test the blood from your HIV test.

How can you get the HIV resistance results?

The test results are hard to understand and best given to you by your doctor. Your medical provider or HIV counselor can tell you how to send them to the doctor you choose. You may need to sign an authorization form to tell us which doctor to send the test results to.

If you do not have a doctor, your counselor or the ACAP staff (206-284-9277) can help you find one. Your doctor will tell you what the test says about your HIV. If you want to wait to go to a doctor you can call your counselor or the clinic when you find one and your counselor will help you get all your HIV information to your doctor.

When can your doctor get the results of the HIV resistance test?

The test results can be sent your doctor, if known, in about 3 to 4 weeks.

If your HIV is resistant to drugs does that mean you would not be helped by HIV medicines?

There are lots of medicines to treat HIV. Sometimes HIV drugs do not work as well on resistant HIV, but they may still work. If your HIV is resistant, your doctor can use the test to help pick other drugs that will work.

Will anyone know about you or your HIV tests?

Washington State law makes everyone working with your HIV testing and health care keep it a secret. This secrecy or confidentiality means no one is allowed to talk about you or give information out about you unless you ask for your health information to be sent to your doctor. There are strong penalties for anyone breaking the confidentiality laws.

Is there any risk for you in this project?

If you have a resistant form of HIV you may worry more about your health. There is a very small and unlikely chance that your test results may become known to someone outside of the project staff. If that happens there are very big legal penalties. Every effort will be made to keep your test results private.

How can you benefit from this project?

The results will help your doctor choose the best medicines to treat your type of HIV. This should help you feel better and stay healthier.

Also, you will help other people. The results of resistance testing will help us learn what types of HIV are spreading in the Seattle area and which medicines might be best for people here. The tests will also help us decide if we can use blood from HIV tests to give resistance tests to more people in our state who are newly diagnosed with HIV.

What are your rights?

You do not have to tell us the name of a health care provider to receive your HIV test results either now or later. You can still take part in the counseling sessions and any other services offered here. This copy of the information sheet is yours to keep.

Who you can call if you have questions or concerns?

You may ask any questions about HIV testing including resistance testing at any time now or in the future. The project phone line is 206-205-1470. You can call us to find out how to get your resistance results. Your doctor (or other health care provider) is the best person to answer your questions about treatment for HIV.

You may also call Susan Buskin, PhD, MPH – VARHS Principal Investigator 206-205-6123