



PATIENT NAME		SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER	
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PRACTITIONER ORDERING THE HIV TEST		PRACTITIONER OBTAINING INFORMED CONSENT	
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SURROGATE NAME AND RELATION TO PATIENT <i>(If patient lacks decision making capacity)</i>	
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**INFORMATION ABOUT HIV TESTING**

**1. WHAT IS THE CONDITION OR DIAGNOSIS FOR WHICH THIS TEST IS RECOMMENDED?**

This test is for diagnosis of infection with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)-the virus that causes AIDS. This test may be recommended to people who are healthy but who have possibly been exposed to HIV, or to patients who have a medical problem that could be related to HIV or AIDS. HIV is a virus that weakens the body's immune system, making it hard to fight infections and cancer. For many years after infection with HIV, a person may have no symptoms but can still pass the virus to others. If HIV is not treated, an infected person eventually becomes very sick and may die. The advanced stage of HIV infection, when a person's immune system is very weak from the virus, is called AIDS.

**2. WHAT DOES THIS TEST INVOLVE?**

This test detects antibodies that the body makes in response to HIV infection. Blood is taken with a needle or by pricking a finger. In some cases, this test may be done on fluid from inside your mouth (oral fluid). If your test is positive, the result must be confirmed with a different type of test. If your test is performed on blood from a vein and the first result is positive (indicating likely HIV infection), a second test will be done automatically to confirm the results. If your test is done using oral fluid or blood from a finger prick, and the result is positive (indicating likely HIV infection), blood must be taken from a vein for a second test to confirm the results.

**3. WHAT ARE THE EXPECTED BENEFITS OF THIS TEST?**

This test is the only way to know if you have been infected with HIV. If you have HIV, the sooner you know, the sooner you can take steps to remain healthy. Many effective treatments are available for HIV, and VA can provide these as part of your medical care. These treatments can prevent or delay AIDS and can help patients who are infected with HIV live longer and healthier lives. If you learn you are infected with HIV, you can also take steps to avoid spreading the virus to others.

If you are pregnant or thinking about becoming pregnant, learning whether you have HIV will make it possible for you to make important decisions to protect your health and the health of your child. For more information, see section 7, "How is HIV Spread?"

**4. WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS OF THIS TEST?**

You may feel sad, depressed, angry or anxious if you learn you are infected with HIV. This is natural, but if these feelings are severe your medical provider can refer you to a counselor who can help you deal with the emotional response to your test result.

Although people who are infected with HIV may not feel sick and often live for many years, they are sometimes treated unfairly or badly by others who learn they have HIV or AIDS. In most cases, the results of your HIV test cannot be given to anyone except those directly involved in your care unless you give written permission. VA may share records, including HIV test results, with others inside or outside VA without your prior written permission ONLY IN THESE SPECIAL CASES:

- a. within VA for medical care;
- b. with a VA health care provider or employee in case an employee comes into contact with your blood, such as by an accidental needle-stick;
- c. within VA if the information is needed to see if you qualify for VA benefits;
- d. with a specific health care provider in an emergency if the information is needed to provide you with medical care;
- e. to report to public health authorities;

- f. for a court ordered disclosure of HIV test results;
- g. if the Armed Forces requests it (to use for Department of Defense treatment or benefits);
- h. if Congress requests it for VA program oversight (no names are used);
- i. for VA-approved scientific research (no names are used);
- j. for evaluation of VA's care for patients; and,
- k. to your current sexual partner(s) or a spouse if you will not tell them and it is needed to protect their health.

Your care in VA and your eligibility for VA benefits will not be affected by the results of your HIV test.

## 5. WHAT ARE THE ALTERNATIVES TO THIS TEST?

HIV testing is voluntary and you may decide not to be tested for HIV, or to be tested somewhere else. Some places offer HIV testing without using your name. This is called anonymous testing.

## 6. WHAT WILL THE TEST RESULTS MEAN?

The HIV test is very accurate, but it is important to know what the test results mean, and that sometimes a test result can be incorrect.

**HIV POSITIVE:** If you have a positive HIV test result, this means that you have HIV and that you can pass it to others. People who test HIV positive should make an appointment for medical evaluation. People who test positive should take steps to prevent passing HIV to others. These steps are described below in section 7, "How is HIV spread?"

**HIV NEGATIVE:** If you have a negative HIV test result, this means that the test does not show evidence of HIV at this time. If you were infected with HIV in the past six months, the test could be negative now, but turn positive later. If you have done something in the past six months that puts you at risk for HIV, you should take the test again in six months

**INDETERMINATE:** If you receive an indeterminate HIV test result, this means that the test did not show whether or not you have HIV. This could happen if you have HIV but it was too early for the test to turn positive, or if you have another medical condition that was interfering with the test. If you have an indeterminate HIV test result, you need to have an HIV test repeated at a later date to tell for sure if you have HIV.

You should find out how you are going to get the results of your HIV test. If your HIV test is positive, you may be referred to another medical professional for follow-up care.

## 7. HOW IS HIV SPREAD?

Whether your test is positive or negative, it is important for you to know how HIV is spread. HIV is spread mostly by sexual contact and through sharing needles or "works" (cookers and other things used to prepare drugs for injection) during drug use. HIV can also be spread from an infected mother to her unborn child before birth, during delivery, or by breast feeding.

You cannot tell if someone has HIV by the way the person looks or acts. For this reason, whenever you have sex without a condom - oral, anal, or vaginal sex - you risk getting infected with HIV. You can reduce this risk either by not having sex or by using a condom every time you have any kind of sex.

Any time you inject drugs and share needles or works you risk getting infected with HIV. You can avoid contact with HIV by not injecting drugs or by never sharing needles or works.

If your test for HIV is positive, you should tell your spouse or sexual partner(s) and anyone you have shared needles or works with so that they can get tested. If you are not able to tell your spouse or sexual partner, VA can help by referring you to a public health official, who can notify your partner(s) that they may have been exposed to HIV without revealing your name.

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If you are pregnant or you are considering becoming pregnant, a positive HIV test means that you could infect your child. If you are HIV positive, you can receive medications that will protect your own health and greatly improve the chances your child will be born free of infection. There is no way you can completely prevent passing HIV infection on to your child, but if you receive treatment for HIV during your pregnancy, the risk will be much lower.

**PRACTITIONER OBTAINING INFORMED CONSENT:**

By signing below, I attest to the following:

- Pre-test counseling has been completed.
- All relevant aspects of HIV testing, including indications, benefits, risks, and alternatives including no testing have been discussed with the patient (or surrogate) in language that s/he could understand, and the patient (or surrogate) indicated comprehension of the discussion.
- I have given the patient (or surrogate) an opportunity to ask questions.
- I did not use threats, inducements, or misleading information, or make any attempt to coerce the patient/surrogate to consent to this HIV test.
- I have offered the patient (or surrogate) the opportunity to review a printed copy of the consent form.

PRACTITIONER SIGNATURE

DATE

**PATIENT OR SURROGATE:**

By signing below, I attest to the following:

- Someone has explained this test and what it is for.
- Someone has explained how this test could help me, and the risks that are involved.
- I understand that I may choose not to be tested or I may choose to be tested elsewhere, and someone has told me what would happen if I have no test.
- Someone has answered all my questions.
- I know that I may refuse or change my mind about having this test. If I do refuse or change my mind, I will not lose my health care or any other VA benefits.
- I understand the contents of this form.
- I choose to have this test.

PATIENT (OR SURROGATE) SIGNATURE

DATE