

Why is Counseling Recommended Before and After Taking the Test?

Deciding whether to get an HIV test may not be easy. Fear and worry about the test are common feelings, both before taking the test and while waiting for results. Counseling can help you decide if this test is right for you and how to respond to the results of the test.



Pre-test counseling can help you understand more about the test and what the test can and cannot tell you. It will help you understand if you are at risk for HIV and how to prevent the spread of HIV.

Post-test counseling can help you understand what your test results mean. It can give you information about how to protect yourself and others from HIV, no matter what the test results are. If your test result is positive, a counselor can direct you to medical, legal and emotional support services, as needed. He or she can also tell you about the services available through the VA.

FOR INFORMATION
ONLINE VISIT:
<http://www.hiv.va.gov>

April 2008

Rapid Oral HIV Test



Questions & Answers

What is the Rapid Oral HIV Test?

This test tells if you have HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

With the rapid test, results take as little as 20 minutes!



How Does the Rapid Oral HIV Test Work?

The test looks for HIV antibodies in your body. When HIV enters the body, antibodies are produced.

Who is at Risk for HIV?

HIV is considered a Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD). Anyone who has had sex with someone (vaginal, anal or oral), male or female, should consider an HIV test.

Other risk factors include:

- Sharing needles or works to inject drugs/vitamins or for tattooing/piercing.
- Having sex with an injection drug user.
- Having been a sex partner with someone who has HIV.
- Being a victim of sexual assault.
- Having a sexually transmitted disease.

What Happens When You Get Tested?

- The test is explained to you by a health provider.
- A health provider will ask you to rub your gums with a special cotton pad.
- The results are ready in as little as 20 minutes.
- You will learn your results and discuss what they mean.
- Your test result will be confidential (results will only be discussed with you) but it may also be put in your medical record. Your test result will not affect your VA benefits.

What Does a Negative Test Result Mean?

A negative test result means that no HIV antibodies have been found at this time.

This could mean one of two things:

(1) You do not have HIV

OR

(2) You have HIV but your body has not created HIV antibodies yet. It can take from 3 to 6 months after infection for antibodies to show up. If you have participated in any HIV risk behaviors in the 6 months before the test, you should get tested again.

What Does a Positive Result Mean?

A positive test result means HIV antibodies may be in your body. Positive results must always be confirmed by another test that is sent to the lab. A confirmed positive test result means:

- You have HIV and can give it to other people during vaginal, anal or oral sex.
- You can give HIV to others if you share needles and works to inject drugs/vitamins or for any other reason.
- A pregnant woman may pass the virus to the fetus in her womb or to the baby during birth or breastfeeding. Medications are available to reduce the risk of transmission.

Why Should You Get Tested?

- Getting diagnosed early can improve your quality of life and improve your treatment options.
- Knowing your HIV status helps you protect yourself and others.
- If you test negative, you may feel less anxious after testing.
- An HIV test should be part of routine examinations.