

Why is HIV testing so important?

- › Early diagnosis of HIV is associated with greatly improved medical outcomes. In addition, a patient's knowledge of his or her HIV status may substantially reduce his or her risk of transmitting the virus.
- › VHA is the largest single provider of HIV care in the United States, providing care to more than 24,000 Veterans with HIV in 2010. **Yet, only 20 percent of Veterans in VA care have been tested for HIV.**
- › Our goal is to diagnose HIV infection as soon as possible so that Veterans can receive the excellent care provided by VHA and remain healthy for many years to come.



What is VA's policy on HIV testing?

- › VA HIV testing for patients is voluntary and confidential.
- › As of August 2009, VA no longer requires either written consent or scripted pre/post test counseling.
- › The new VA policy allows Veterans to provide verbal consent. Prior to giving consent, patients must be provided with educational materials and given the opportunity to have any questions answered.



Which patients should be tested for HIV? How often?

- › In line with current CDC recommendations, HIV testing should be part of routine medical care for everyone; this includes **all** Veterans. Any patient without documentation of an HIV test in his or her health record should be offered a test.
- › We encourage all Veterans to get tested at least once.
- › Patients documented to be HIV negative but who have ongoing risk factors should be offered an HIV test at least annually.



Whose responsibility is it to test patients for HIV?

- › VA encourages **all** providers (especially those in primary care, mental health, and substance abuse clinics) to routinely offer HIV testing to all of their patients.

Where can I find more information?

- › www.hiv.va.gov (*Internet*)
- › vaww.hiv.va.gov (*intranet—for VA staff only*)