

HUMAN IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS (HIV) TEST (AIDS VIRUS) INFORMATION BOOKLET

**Important
Health
Information**

Michigan Community Public Health Agency
HP-143
Authority: P.A. 368/1978

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Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) Test (AIDS Virus)

Information Booklet

Q: What is an HIV Test?

A: Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is the virus that causes Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS).

Laboratory tests tell whether you have been infected with HIV. A test is not considered positive unless a different, backup test is done and also reads positive. These tests are conducted on a single sample of your blood, or on an oral sample from your mouth. Test results may, on rare occasions, be inconclusive, and this possibility should be discussed with your health professional.

Q: Will the HIV test tell me if I have AIDS?

A: No. A Positive test means you have been exposed to the virus and that you have become infected. While some people infected with the virus have gone on to develop AIDS, others have not yet developed AIDS. Healthy lifestyle and behavior changes, improved diet and early medical treatment may help you delay, or avoid, the development of AIDS.

A positive test will not tell you if you have AIDS, whether you will develop AIDS or how long you've been infected. The period from time of infection to the development of AIDS may be eleven years or more.

Q: How long after exposure does it take to tell if I am infected?

A: Most people will test positive within three months to six months after exposure. The average time is 45 days. However, a few people have taken up to one year to test positive.

Q: How does a person become infected with HIV?

A: The virus is most commonly spread through sexual contact (vaginal, anal, or oral sex) and by sharing of needles or works to shoot injectable drugs. An infected mother may infect her baby during pregnancy, at the time of birth, or while breast feeding. Very rarely, contact with blood through open cuts or wounds, or splashes to the eyes, may also spread the virus. **You cannot get infected with the virus by donating or giving blood, or through casual contact.**

Q: Do I have to have this test?

A: Generally, whether you are tested is your decision. In Michigan, testing is required if you are a potential organ, semen, tissue, or blood donor; a military recruit; an immigrant; or if you have been charged and bound over, or convicted of certain crimes in a court of law. In addition, some health care facilities may have an admission requirement that you consent to be tested if a health care worker is accidentally exposed to your blood during your stay in their facility.

An insurance company has the right to request that you take an HIV test if you apply for new health or life insurance. If you refuse or if you test positive, as with any other potentially serious health condition, you will probably be turned down for this new insurance.

Q: Who should consider having the HIV test?

A: The Michigan Community Public Health Agency recommends that HIV testing be considered by anyone who meets any of the following:

- People who may have a sexually-transmitted disease (venereal disease).
- People who have shared needles or who have a history of drug abuse.

- Men who have had sex with other men.
- Men or women who have had unprotected sex with anyone who is not known to have tested HIV negative. Unprotected sex means there has been an exchange of semen and/or vaginal secretions between the partners.)
- People who have had more than one sex partner.
- People who have had sex with prostitutes (male or female).
- People who received blood products or blood transfusions between 1978 and 1985.
- People who exchange sex for drugs or money.
- Women with known risks, who are pregnant or who are considering pregnancy.
- People who are infected with tuberculosis.
- People who have had exposure to the blood of someone who may be infected.
- People who have had sex with any person from the above list, particularly with injecting drug users.

Q: Where can I have the test done without my name being used?

A: All local health departments and other testing centers designated by the Michigan Community Public Health Agency will provide the option to you to be tested with your name (confidential testing) or without your name (anonymous testing). Any person giving you this test is required by law to keep your test results confidential, with a few exceptions specified by law. If you request testing without your name, these facilities have trained counselors who will counsel you on an anonymous basis.

If anonymous testing is done and you have a positive test, you need to know that health care and treatment are not provided on an anonymous basis. To receive a copy of your test results, a name will be required and retesting will be recommended.

Q: Who will know the results of my tests?

A: Once again, any person giving you this test is required by law to keep your test results confidential. Even the courts must follow specific rules before they can require disclosure through a court order. A subpoena is not sufficient to require disclosure. You will be asked to sign a separate release form. If this information needs to be released beyond the requirements of the law, you will be asked to sign a separate release form.

In Michigan, positive test results are reportable to the health department. The health department will maintain your confidentiality and use this information to understand the extent of infection in Michigan's communities. This information may also be used by your health provider or local health department as needed to properly diagnose and care for you and protect your health, to assist you in notifying your sexual or needle sharing partners, and to prevent spread of the virus. The test results, if positive, will also be given to a potential spouse if you are planning to get married. If you are a health care worker (HCW), you should be aware of state guidelines regarding infected HCWs.

If you are tested in a physician's private practice office, or in the office of a physician affiliated with or under contract with a Health Maintenance Organization, you may request that your name, address, and phone number not be included in the HIV positive report to local public health. It is against the law in Michigan for local public health departments to keep lists of names of infected people.

Michigan law now requires that, if you are infected, your physician or the local health officer must warn (notify) all of your known sexual or needle-sharing partners of the fact that they have been exposed. In doing this, they are required to keep your identity confidential .

Q: Are there any risks involved in having the test done?

A: There are virtually no medical risks in drawing a small sample of blood. Only sterile needles and syringes are used for this purpose. Once the needle or syringe is used, it is safely thrown away, or properly sterilized. If an oral sample is used for the test, a specially-treated pad is placed between the lower cheek and gum and held for two minutes. This causes no risk or pain to the patient.

Before you are tested, you should carefully think about to whom you would tell the results, and what emotional support systems are available to you. The Michigan Civil Rights Commission has ruled that AIDS, HIV infection, and the suspicion of AIDS or HIV infection are considered handicapping conditions. Therefore, people are not to be discriminated against, and have all the rights of a handicapped person as defined under the Handicappers' Civil Rights Act of 1974. The federal laws make similar rulings through the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 strictly forbids discrimination against persons with HIV or AIDS.

Q: What will happen to the consent form after I sign it?

A: Procedures for filing the consent form will vary from facility to facility. Please ask your health professional if you would like to know what their confidentiality procedure is.

Q: Can I change my mind after I sign the consent form?

A: Yes, you can change your mind at any time before the laboratory performs the test. If you change your mind, you will have to provide a written request to the person or organization providing you with this information booklet that the test not be done.

Q: How will this test help me?

A: If You are tested You most likely will be required to appear in person to get your test results. Whether your results are positive or negative, your overall health may be helped from discussions with your health professional.

If you test negative, the test indicates either that you are not infected, or possibly, that you were infected very recently (within the past 3-6 months). You can learn through counseling how to protect yourself from infection in the future. If you have recently practiced risky behavior, you may want to be retested, especially if you have one or more of the risks listed on page 3 & 4.

If you test positive, the test indicates that you have been infected with HIV. You can still take action to benefit your health and the health of others. This includes maintaining a good state of physical and mental health. By doing so, you may delay the development of AIDS. It is suggested that you:

- Maintain good nutrition, exercise and get adequate rest;
- Receive emotional support, and work on managing stress;
- Eliminate recreational drugs, (or at least reduce) alcohol, and smoking;
- Avoid getting sexually-transmitted diseases (use latex condoms);
- Stop injecting drugs and sharing equipment if you do so now. The next best practice would be to not share needles or works. At the very least, you should learn to clean your needles or works.
- Receive all recommended vaccines. Discuss with your physician which vaccines are recommended and which should be avoided.
- Inform all known sexual or needle-sharing partners.

Drugs are now available for treatment of persons infected with HIV even if symptoms are not present. Knowledge of whether one is infected may be important because early treatment is beneficial to many people with HIV.

To Reduce the Chance of Infecting Others, the following precautions should be taken if you are HIV-infected:

- Don't have sex that exposes others to your semen, vaginal secretions or blood.
- If you are going to have sex, always inform your partner before having sex that you are infected, and use a latex condom.
- Seek counseling regarding becoming pregnant or fathering a child.
- Do not donate blood or organs (change designation on driver's license).
- Seek treatment for drug abuse; do not share needles or works; at the very least, learn to clean needles and works.
- If you are pregnant and planning to continue that pregnancy, discuss with your physician treatments that may protect your baby.

Q: Whom should I tell if I am HIV-positive?

A: If you test positive, you need to know that this infection is not passed to another person through casual contact. Michigan law requires that you must notify any new sexual partner prior to having sex with them. Past sexual and needle-sharing partners are to be notified so that they can also be counseled and offered testing. If requested, your local health department will provide you assistance in notifying partners.

Inform all health care providers, both medical and dental, who are providing you treatment, about your HIV infection. This will help them care for you.

The law prohibits health care providers from refusing to treat you based upon your HIV infection.

Recent studies have shown that the administration of the drug “zidovudine” (AZT) to HIV-infected women during their pregnancy will help reduce the transmission of HIV to their infants. This drug may reduce the risk of transmission from mother to newborn by about two thirds. If you know you are infected with HIV and pregnant you should consult with your health care provider about taking this drug.

Finally, be careful about discussing your HIV status with others. Some people may not understand the nature of the infection or how it is actually spread. This may lead to misunderstanding and create problems for you with friends, co-workers, or others.

Q: What if I have more questions?

A: Please ask the health professional who gave you this booklet. Your health professional will have the answers to your questions or will get the answer for you.

You should feel free to call the statewide AIDS information hotline (1-800-872-AIDS; Spanish 1-800-862-SIDA; TDD 1-800-332-0849) or your local health department at anytime, if you have questions or need help.