



HIV Pre-test Information Sheet

What is HIV?

HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is a virus that weakens the immune system (your body's defense against illness). Without treatment, HIV eventually makes the body's immune system too weak to fight infections. This can lead to AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome).

How can I get HIV?

HIV can be passed from someone who has HIV to another person who does not have HIV through sexual or blood contact. HIV can be found in the blood, semen (including pre-cum), vaginal fluids, rectal fluids and breast milk of people living with HIV.

Possible risks

No Risk	Lower Risk	Higher Risk
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shaking hands • Hugs and kisses • Coughs and sneezes • Swimming pools • Toilet seats or water fountains • Sharing utensils and dishes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • oral sex without a condom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • anal or vaginal sex without a condom
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • anal or vaginal sex with a latex/non-latex condom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sharing sex toys without cleaning between users
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • getting tattoos or body piercing with unsterilized equipment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sharing needles and other equipment for injecting drugs or steroids

How do I prevent HIV?

- Using condoms, lube and (or) dental dams (oral sex) during sexual contact.
- Getting tested regularly for STIs (sexually transmitted infections). Having an STI increases your risk of getting HIV.
- Using a sterile needle when you inject drugs and avoid sharing any drug equipment.

How do I know if I have HIV?

Some people have flu-like symptoms, fever, rash, night sweats. Most do not. The only way to know for sure if you have HIV is to get a blood test 12 weeks after you think you might have been in contact with the virus. If you do a test before then, it might not be accurate.

What types of testing are available at the Sexual Health Centre?

- **Confidential testing:** Your name and date of birth are written on the form that is sent with your blood test to the Public Health Lab. The results are not shared with anyone other than Public Health, the doctor ordering the test, and you. If you test positive for HIV, a nurse from Public Health will call you to follow up.

- **Anonymous testing:** A code known only to you is sent with your blood to the Public Health Lab. Your name is NOT reported to the Public Health department. You must bring your code with you to get your testing results in 3 weeks.

Why should I get tested?

Benefits of getting tested	Risks of getting tested
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find out if you have HIV or not so you won't be worried about it • Protect others from getting HIV • Early treatment and support for better long-term health if you test positive for HIV 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible negative reaction from friends, family, employers or partners • Stress of waiting for result • Stress of coping with HIV as a long-term condition

What do the test results mean?

- **Negative** (non-reactive) - There are no antibodies to HIV in the blood (you do not have HIV).
- **Indeterminate** - The results are not clear and you must repeat the test.
- **Positive** (reactive) - You have been infected with HIV (there are antibodies in your blood).

What happens if I have a positive test result?

- **Supports:** Finding out you have HIV can change your life. However, people with HIV are able to live long and well thanks to huge improvements in treatment. You can choose to receive counselling and information to help you manage this chronic infection. You will also be given the name of an HIV doctor and resources in the community to help you.
- **Partners:** If you test positive, a nurse will call you to help you inform your previous partners that they may have been exposed to HIV. This follow-up is confidential and the nurse will not tell your partners your name. This follow-up occurs so that your partners can be informed about HIV testing options.
- **Disclosure:** In Canada, some people have been criminally prosecuted and convicted for not telling other people they have HIV before they had sex with them. If you have questions about this, visit the CATIE website (www.catie.ca) or call 1-800-263-1638, or visit HALCO (HIV & AIDS Legal Clinic of Ontario) website (www.halco.org) or call 1-888-705-8889.

If you have any questions about the information on this form or if you do not want HIV testing, please tell the nurse.

It is your choice whether you have HIV testing.