

# HIV TESTING

## Q&A



### WHO

If you or your partner(s) have ever :

- had sex without using a protective barrier
- had sex while under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- tested positive for another sexually transmitted or blood-borne infection (e.g. syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia, hepatitis B, hepatitis C, etc.)
- shared needles, syringes or other drug use equipment
- had tattooing, piercing or acupuncture with un-sterilized equipment
- had a blood transfusion or received other blood products before November 1986

### WHAT

HIV - the Human Immunodeficiency Virus - is a virus that attacks the immune system, resulting in a chronic, progressive illness that leaves people vulnerable to opportunistic infections and cancers. In order to be infected, the virus must enter a person's bloodstream. HIV cannot survive outside the body. An HIV test is a simple blood test that detects whether or not you have HIV antibodies in your blood.

### WHEN

Anyone who engages in risky behaviour should be tested. You should get tested no sooner than three months after the last time you engaged in risky behaviour. HIV-positive people are most "infectious" (able to transmit the virus to another person) during the three- to six-month window period.

### WHERE

HIV testing is available through physicians, at clinics and in hospitals. To locate a testing centre in or near your community, call your provincial/territorial HIV/AIDS hotline.



## **WHY**

If the result is “negative” :

- you may experience less stress and anxiety in your life
- you can learn more about how to reduce your risk of becoming infected

If the result is “positive”

- you can get early treatment to stay healthy and
- you can take precautions to avoid transmitting HIV to others
- if you are pregnant, early treatment will also reduce the chances of your baby getting HIV



## **HOW**

It is your choice to get tested, and you must give your consent in writing.

**Pre-test counseling**

**Why you want to take the test?**

**When and how you think you were exposed to HIV?**

**Whether you have any questions about the test?**

With standard testing a small sample of blood is taken from your arm and sent to a lab.

With rapid testing a drop of blood is taken by pricking your finger and tested at the clinic while you wait.

You get your result in five to ten minutes.

Not all testing sites offer rapid testing.

HIV testing is either anonymous or confidential. An anonymous test means that only you will know you took the test and what the result was. If you give your name the test and results are confidential. There are two types of confidential tests:

- nominal - your name will appear on the test form and the test result.
- non-nominal - a code is used instead of your name.

Note that HIV testing is not automatically anonymous.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON TESTING SITES IN YOUR  
AREA CONTACT YOUR LOCAL AIDS SERVICE  
ORGANIZATION.  
VISIT [WWW.ASO411.CA](http://WWW.ASO411.CA)**