

## A "POSITIVE" HIV TEST

A "positive" antibody test means that you have HIV. This means that you could also give it to someone else.

Knowing that you have HIV gives you a chance to do something about it. You can begin to take care of yourself, like seeing a doctor and a case manager.

If your test shows that you might have early HIV infection, a trained counselor will contact you privately. The counselor will set up more tests, help you to see a doctor and talk about treatment

## IF YOU ARE INFECTED

If you test positive, there are things that you have to do to take care of yourself and other people. They are so important that they are a part of public health law. Some things you have to do are:

- Use a condom every time you have sex.
- Never share needles or syringes (works).
- Tell current and future sex partners that you have HIV.
- Tell people that you had sex or shared needles with in the past about your infection. A counselor will help you notify your partners and will not tell them your name.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

- Your local health department
- Your mental health/substance abuse agency
- The National AIDS Hotline:  
1-800-342-AIDS
- The National Substance Abuse Help  
Line: 1-800-662-HELP



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# HIV: AM I INFECTED?



## HIV TESTING AND COUNSELING



## HIV INFECTION

When you have HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus), it weakens your body's ability to fight illness, making it very easy for you to get sick. When you have HIV and also get other infections, such as TB or certain kinds of pneumonia, then you have AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome). The number of persons in the United States living with HIV continues to increase, and of the estimated 850,000 to 950,000 people living with HIV, about 25 percent (an estimated 180,000 to 280,000 people) are not aware they are infected.

### BENEFITS OF TESTING

The decision to find out if you have HIV is a smart one. Maybe you have been exposed to someone with HIV and didn't get it. But, you can change what you do so you are never exposed again. If you find out you have HIV, you can get medical care quickly so you can live a longer, healthier life. Finding out now is better than finding out after you get sick. Knowing can also help you decide about new relationships and about having a baby.

### WHAT TO EXPECT

As part of your clinic visit, you will be tested for HIV unless you refuse. A small amount of blood will be taken from your arm and sent to a laboratory. It will take about 2 or 3 weeks for your test results to be ready.

## THE HIV TESTS

HIV testing is used to find out if you have the virus that causes AIDS. In order to do this, the lab will run two tests on your blood sample. The first test looks for antibodies in your blood that your body makes when you have HIV. If the antibody test is positive, you have HIV. These tests are very accurate. If the test results show that you have HIV, the lab will have tested and retested your blood at least four times. However, the tests cannot tell you how long you have been infected or by whom.

If the first test is negative, the lab will do a different test, HIV PCR, that may find HIV in your blood before antibodies develop. (These tests will only be done when agencies use the N.C. Public Health Laboratory.)

Your test result will be put in your medical record. Information about you will be kept private, according to state and federal law.

### A "NEGATIVE" RESULT

If your test is negative, it means that HIV antibodies were not found in your blood. This could mean that you do not have HIV. Or it could mean that you are infected, but that you were infected during the last three months and that your body has not made enough antibodies for the lab test to find. If you have a negative test and may have been exposed to HIV during the last three months, ask your clinician about when to get another test. A negative result does not mean that you can't get the virus if you are exposed to it!

## STAYING "NEGATIVE"

If you are not infected with HIV, you can stay that way by:

- Not having sex at all and never sharing needles or works; or
- Using a condom (rubber) if you have sex:
  - Using a dry or flavored condom or other barrier such as a dental dam if you have oral sex, to keep semen or vaginal fluids from getting in your mouth or your partner's mouth.
  - Using a water-based lubricant (lube) with a condom if you have vaginal or anal sex.
  - *Not* using oil-based lubricants such as baby oil, petroleum jelly, grease, lotions or creams, because these will cause the condom to break.
- Always cleaning your works *before* using if you shoot drugs and share needles or works. Water is not enough!
- Not using drugs of any kind! When you're high on drugs or even alcohol, you may forget or not be able to do the things to protect yourself from HIV.