

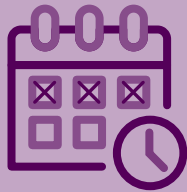
HIV TESTING FACTSHEET

When should I get tested?

If you are sexually active or have shared needles or other injecting equipment, then it is recommended you get tested regularly. It is a good idea to get tested more frequently but you should get tested at least once a year. Some people are recommended to get tested more frequently, such as every 3 months for men, who have sex with other men and trans men.

Will I have any symptoms if I get HIV?

HIV does not always show symptoms, and you can feel well, so the only way to know is to have a HIV test. Being tested regularly puts you in control of your health.



715 Health Check

All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are eligible for an annual health check, called a 715 Health Check. Tests for HIV and other STIs can be part of this. These 715 Health Checks are free at Aboriginal Medical Services and bulk billing clinics. If you're not sure if it will be free, ask the clinic.

Let your doctor know that you would like to get tested for HIV and STIs as part of your 715 Health Check.

Where can I get tested?

See any doctor at your local Aboriginal Health Centre, doctor (GP) or sexual health clinic and they can help you get tested.

If you think your doctor might not know a lot about HIV, or you're not comfortable speaking with your regular doctor about HIV or sexual health, it might be best to see a sexual health clinic or a doctor who specialises in sexual health, if there is one in your area.



You can visit the Better to Know website to search for doctors, clinics and Aboriginal Medical Services:

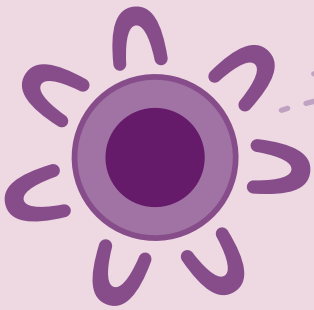
www.bettertoknow.org.au

Is it confidential?

Yes. Only your doctor, nurse, or Aboriginal Health Worker needs to know. They are not allowed to tell anyone unless you give them permission.

If you are worried about seeing someone at your local health centre, you could think about seeing a different clinic or someone in another town or area. You have the right to request health workers of the gender you feel more comfortable with, if they are available.





WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT WAYS TO GET A HIV TEST?

Laboratory Tests



Laboratory tests for HIV are done through a doctor where they draw the blood from your vein and then send it to a laboratory. The doctor tells you the results about a week later.

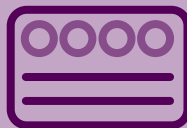
Rapid Tests

Rapid HIV testing is done by your doctor or a trained peer tester. They test you in person at the clinic or health centre and you get the results within 30 minutes while you are there. They can use either blood from a finger prick or oral fluid. If the rapid test gives a reactive (preliminary positive) result, this needs to be confirmed with a blood test sent to a laboratory.



Dried Blood Spot Tests

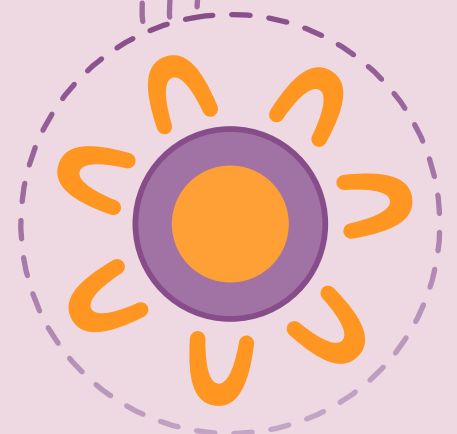
Dried Blood Spot (DBS) tests for HIV are tests that you order, put some drops of blood on a card and mail to the laboratory, and then they contact you later with your results. These may not be available in all Australian states and territories.



Self-Tests

HIV self-tests are like rapid tests done at a clinic but can be done in the comfort of your own home and you receive the results within approximately 15 minutes. These use blood from a finger prick.

If the HIV self-test gives a reactive (preliminary positive) result, these also need to be confirmed with a blood test ordered by the doctor and sent to a laboratory. There may not be clinics nearby in regional or remote areas for these confirmatory tests, so HIV self-tests may not be suitable for people living in these areas. If you are going to use a self-test and there is not a clinic nearby, you might want to plan to travel to a clinic in case you need to.



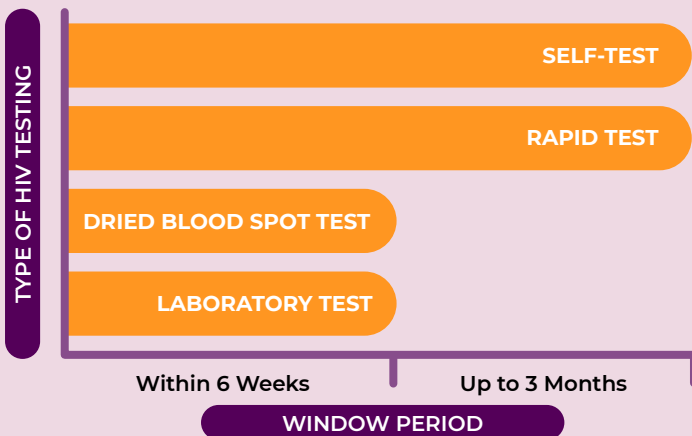
What is a window period?

Different HIV tests can take different amounts of time to detect HIV after someone might have been exposed. This is called the window period. The window period means HIV might be in your blood but it's too early to show up in a test.

Laboratory and Dried Blood Spot tests can detect HIV within six weeks after a possible exposure to HIV. Rapid tests and self-tests can take up to three months.

If you have had a test in the window period, you will need to have another test after the window period to double check the results. If your test gives a HIV negative result, this will be accurate if you have not had a risk for HIV in the window period.

It is very important that we test ourselves on a regular basis to ensure we are healthy, and this will also protect our family and community.



What about other STIs and other infections?

When you get tested for HIV, it is very important to also get tested for other STIs and other infections like hepatitis B and C. There are very high rates of STIs, including syphilis, gonorrhoea and chlamydia in many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Many of these infections have no symptoms so the only way to know is to get tested. Most STIs are easy to treat. Talk to your doctor or Aboriginal Health Worker about getting tests for STIs and hepatitis with your HIV test.

How much does testing cost?



Aboriginal Medical Services, public clinics and some doctors will be free, but some clinics charge for an appointment. Check with your doctor if you are not sure. HIV self-tests are around \$25 plus postage.

Other factsheets:

- PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis)
- Treatment as Prevention
- PEP (Post-Exposure Prophylaxis)
- Safe Injecting

Other resources:

- Us Mob and HIV Booklet
- Us Mob and HIV Website
- Better Know Website
- Young Deadly Free Website
- ATSIHIV Website



Services for information and support:

- State and Territory HIV Services
- Organisations for People with HIV
- Positive Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Network (PATSIIN)
- Organisations to find Aboriginal Medical Services
- Anwernekenhe National HIV Alliance
- Health Equity Matters

