

# HIV Testing

## Why Everyone Should Be Doing It

george house trust  
still life with HIV



# Why Test?

**There are over 80,000 people living with HIV in the UK today and around a third of them don't yet know.**

The longer HIV goes untreated, the more damage it causes. Anyone who has sex without a condom or shares injecting equipment may have HIV. When you don't know you are HIV positive, you are more likely to pass it on to others.

**Sooner is better** - Taking HIV treatments means people should expect to have a normal life span. But unless you test and find out you cannot get medical advice and start treatment.

If you wait until you become ill before you take a HIV test, the treatments will not work so well, putting your health at serious risk.

**Know, don't guess** - It's better to know if you have or don't have HIV, then you can stop worrying about the "what if's". Avoiding testing won't make HIV go away.

**Be more in control** - of your health and your life. If you are positive you can take steps to look after your health and also help protect others. There is plenty of support and advice to help you. If you are negative you can get help and advice to stay negative.

## **Worried that other people will find out you've had a HIV test?**

It's confidential. HIV test results like all sexual health clinic records are completely separate from all your other medical files. Even your GP won't know unless you agree to tell them. No family members, employers, landlords, insurance agents or government bodies will be told. If you're really worried about people seeing you when you go for a test then why not go for a test somewhere else – you can go anywhere you want.

## **What does the test involve?**

Most HIV tests involve taking a small sample of blood from your arm. This is checked in a lab for HIV antibodies in the blood. Some clinics give results the same day, others give the result a week or so later.

Some places use other methods like the Rapid Test or an Instant Test. Rapid Testing give results in 20 to 30 minutes. Instant Testing uses a finger prick blood sample and gives results in 60 seconds. With both the Rapid and Instant Tests, any positive result must be checked with a full blood test which would be arranged for you.

## **Where can I test?**

You can get a HIV test from the NHS at your GP's surgery or at the Sexual Health Clinic, some are called the Genito Urinary Medicine (GUM) Clinic, in a local hospital. Some NHS clinics have a "walk-in and wait" service, where you can turn up without an appointment. Most tests are by appointment only. Contact them first to check what times they are open.

You do not have to use the clinic nearest to where you live, you can go to any. It's anonymous, free and confidential - you don't even have to use your real name when you register at a Sexual Health clinic.

You can look in the phone book or online to find your nearest clinic, or go to [www.betterclinics.co.uk](http://www.betterclinics.co.uk) which has smart tools to help find the best clinic for you.

## **What does it mean if the test is negative?**

If you do test negative then you need to make sure you stay that way, use condoms and never share kit for injecting drugs. Some people take more risks straight after receiving a negative result; a negative result does not mean you cannot catch HIV.

## **What does it mean if the test is positive?**

It means that you have HIV. Having HIV does not mean that you have AIDS. You can be HIV positive and remain well for many years.

Now you know that you are HIV positive, doctors can give you the help and advice you need including when to start taking treatments. Most people now live long and good lives with HIV. If you are pregnant, modern treatment and care now mean most babies will not be born with HIV.

## What support is available to me?

Expert community organisations throughout the country provide support to people living with HIV. George House Trust provides services free of charge to people living with HIV in the North West of England. Last year we helped over 2,000 people living with or affected by HIV.

We can help with:

- Advice, support and information
- Counselling
- Opportunities to meet other people living with HIV
- Events and courses
- Financial help

Full details of our services can be found at [www.ght.org.uk](http://www.ght.org.uk)

You can contact George House Trust on  
0161 274 4499

## **Other HIV Voluntary Organisations in the North West:**

### **Black Health Agency**

[www.blackhealthagency.org.uk](http://www.blackhealthagency.org.uk) | 0845 4504247

### **Body Positive Cheshire & North Wales**

[www.bpcnw.org.uk](http://www.bpcnw.org.uk) | Crewe: 01270 653150  
North Wales: 01492 532943

### **Body Positive North West**

[www.bpnw.org.uk](http://www.bpnw.org.uk) | 0161 882 2202

### **Sahir House**

[www.sahir.uk.com](http://www.sahir.uk.com) | 0151 708 9080

### **Terrence Higgins Trust**

[www.tht.org.uk](http://www.tht.org.uk) | 0151 666 9890

## How is HIV passed on?

HIV is passed on in some bodily fluids - blood, semen, vaginal fluid, anal mucous, breast milk.

HIV cannot be passed on through the air, touching, sharing cutlery or crockery, kissing, using toilet seats, or by blood sucking insects.

HIV dies quickly outside the body, it has to get inside cells in the bloodstream.

- Anal or vaginal sex without condoms is how most HIV is passed on. Only condoms stop HIV, other contraceptive methods do NOT stop HIV or any other sexually transmitted infections.
- HIV is also passed on through the sharing of injecting equipment such as for drug use or steroids.

- HIV can also be passed on from a HIV positive mother to her baby without the right treatment and care.

If you have had vaginal or anal sex without condoms, or shared injecting equipment then you should have an HIV test.

## **Where can I get more information?**

For more information on HIV testing, treatments or services you can contact the HIV Community organisations listed above or visit the following websites:

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/hiv](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/hiv)

[www.avert.org](http://www.avert.org)

[www.aidsmap.com](http://www.aidsmap.com)

George House Trust  
77 Ardwick Green North  
Manchester  
M12 6FX  
0161 274 4499  
[www.ght.org.uk](http://www.ght.org.uk)

Registered Charity 700364

Printed using 100% recycled (minimum 75% post-consumer waste) paper.  
Please recycle after use.

