



Pre HIV Test Counselling Guidelines

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Effective voluntary HIV testing & pre testcounselling can:

- 1) Reduce spread of HIV with sharing information on how it can be passed on - a preventive goal
- 2) Provide education, ability to make better choices
- 3) Provide resources, to encourage follow-up to explore support & services

Questions to Ask

HIV Tests are standard tests that take a sample of blood from your vein & send it to a lab, such as the Antibody test. Ask the health professional:

- What type of test they are using?
- What is the time to find out the result?
- What is the "window period" for the type of test?
- When & where can you book an appointment for post-test counselling to find out the test result?

If it is a rapid on-site tests where you receive your results the same day ask for post test counselling, and ensure there is enough time to ask questions, especially if you test positive (you have the HIV antibodies in your system).

Window Period

The "window period" is the time you were exposed to the virus & when you start to produce antibodies that can be detected by the test. During this time a test may give a false HIV negative result that may not mean that no infection has taken place but that there needs to a longer time before accurate testing can occur.

Benefits from having the HIV test could be:

- A HIV- negative test result can relieve anxiety.
- A person who tests positive with HIV+ could access medical treatment.
- A HIV+ positive test result can motivate YOU to reduce or stop high risk activities.
- A HIV+ test result can prevent further passing on of virus.
- A positive HIV test result if you are pregnant could support early treatment & information can be provided on how to prevent HIV transmission to the baby.
- Previous sexual or needle-sharing partners can be informed & be given the opportunity to take the HIV antibody test too.

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Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is a virus & it attacks the human immune system that people need to fight off infections like the cold or flu. There is no vaccine to protect YOU against getting it. There is only PREVENTION that comes from knowing what HIV & AIDS is, how it spreads, how to protect YOU, & being tested if YOU have been at risk.

HIV is a virus that is preventable. The risk depends on what type of contact you have had & with what body fluid.

When infected with HIV the immune system slowly weakens. HIV slowly turns to AIDS.

People living with HIV are living much longer than before, mostly because doctors know more & have new medications to help a person to deal better with the virus.

If you are HIV positive the sooner you are tested, the sooner you can receive vital medical treatment.

If you do not have HIV and the test is negative it does not mean you are immune to the disease, however, that you still need to prevent HIV by being aware of what causes it.

Decision to Test Checklist HIV Test available for any person who may be at risk, factors may include:

- Unsafe, unprotected, or high risk sex
- Exposure to HIV through shared needles
- Using unsterile tattooing or body piercing equipment
- Presence of other sexually transmitted infections
- Exposure to unscreened blood that may have come through medical procedures
- Recently travelled to a high HIV prevalence country, & was at risk due to any of the above.

Canadian Human rights law requires that HIV testing include:

- Informed consent
- Pre- test counseling before test
- Post-test counselling after test results have been shared
- Guaranteed confidentiality of test results

The health care professional who performs the test is required to discuss these items with YOU by law. Being provided with just a brochure, guide or pamphlet with information is not sufficient, and is only meant to provide extra information on valuable resources, services, or support.

Informed Consent

Before the HIV Test is done, informed consent must be given by YOU. The health professional must inform you of what HIV is, disclose advantages & disadvantages of testing for HIV, listen, answer questions & seeking permission to proceed through each step of counselling & testing before the HIV test is given. To obtain informed consent for testing for HIV, a client must be deemed competent, must understand the purposes, risks, harms & benefits of

being tested, as well as those of not being tested, & his/her consent must be voluntary.

People who are tested for HIV without their knowledge or against their will are regarded as having their human rights violated blatantly.

Pre- test Counselling

Before having the HIV test ensure that you will also receive pre-test counselling.

Counselling by the health professional (doctor, nurse, or health care worker) before & after being tested for HIV is a time to share important health information that can save lives & is YOUR Human Right.

Testing blood serum for HIV can have medical, emotional, spiritual, & social impacts on YOU. Be prepared to ask questions, and to discuss your health. Also, ask if they have booked enough time for the pre HIV test counselling. Be prepared for the test by knowing YOUR rights, benefits, & drawbacks. Know how to manage your risks, protect yourself & others. The information must be shared verbally, be accurate & clear.

The health professional who performs the test, & notifies YOU of the result must talk with you about harm reduction activities, your understanding of the HIV & AIDS, & available resources & support. Before testing has occurred, an open discussion needs to include talks about unsafe sex, unborn babies, & high-risk activities.

This may be YOUR only opportunity to openly ask a health professional about the basics of HIV & the prevention or management of the disease. Make sure that YOU receive this health service.