

Frequently asked questions about HIV testing

Is this a test for AIDS?

No, AIDS is a condition which develops years after you are first infected with the HIV virus and it occurs because your immune system has been damaged by the virus. This test looks for the HIV virus and if this is present there is treatment that prevents the virus from causing AIDS.

Why should I test for HIV?

We routinely perform an HIV test for people with many different kinds of health problem. This is because HIV can be a cause of some conditions, or contribute to making them worse

OR

HIV can be more common in certain populations...

There are good reasons for knowing your HIV status.

If you get a negative HIV test result:

- you have the reassurance that you do not have HIV
- we do not have to worry about HIV affecting the way we treat your current condition
- you can continue to take steps to reduce your chances of contracting HIV.

If you get a positive HIV test result:

- you will have more control over who to tell, and when, than if you found out when you were ill with HIV infection
- you can take steps to avoid passing it on to your sexual partners
- there are effective treatments that will stop you getting ill with HIV-related diseases
- the earlier HIV treatment is started, the better the outcomes
- we can adjust the treatment for any other condition you have, if necessary, to make sure that treatment is most effective.

What does a negative result mean?

This means you DO NOT have HIV infection. However, if you have possibly been exposed to HIV infection in the past three months you will need to be tested again 3 months after that exposure.

Why would I need to test again?

This is because it can take up to three months for HIV to show up on some blood tests, although many tests can detect it sooner than that. If you have been infected before the test is able to detect HIV, the result might not be accurate so you would need to test again to check the result of your first test.

Will having a negative HIV test result stop me getting life insurance?

The Association of British Insurers (ABI) have issued clear guidance to insurance companies that a negative HIV test result must have no bearing on any insurance applications and that they are not to ask GPs if an applicant has ever had an HIV test. GPs have been advised by both the ABI and the British Medical Association that they should not answer the question if it is asked.