

✓ Groceries

✓ Laundry

✓ HIV Test

✓ Date Night

Make getting an HIV test as routine as other activities. Upgrade your checklist.

ASK FOR AN HIV TEST.



What is HIV?

HIV is a **virus** that attacks your body's defense system (immune system).

Women can get HIV through:

- Vaginal sex
- Anal sex
- Oral sex
- Sharing needles or syringes to inject drugs



Why should I get tested for HIV?

You should get tested for HIV so that you know your status. Knowing your HIV status is important, and the only way to know your HIV status is to get tested. If you have HIV, you can take medicine that helps you live a long, healthy life, if taken as prescribed. The medicine will also prevent you from passing it to someone else.

All women and girls **over the age of 13** should get an HIV test at least once. Pregnant women should get tested during **each pregnancy**. Treatment of HIV during pregnancy can prevent passing HIV to the baby.

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Is HIV testing part of my check-up or usual lab work?

No, HIV tests are not typically part of your usual check-up or lab work. Tests like a Pap smear or a pelvic exam do not check for HIV. If a healthcare provider takes your blood, it does not mean they are checking you for HIV, even if you are being tested for another STD. **Do not assume; you must ask for an HIV test.** At your next appointment, you can say, **"I want to make sure I get tested for HIV today; is that on the list for this check-up?"**

How do I talk to my healthcare provider about HIV testing?

You have the right to ask your healthcare provider questions and receive respectful care.

Here are some tips:

- You can write down your questions before your visit.
- If you are scared or unsure, you can ask a friend or family member to come with you.
- You can say to the healthcare provider: **"I would like to get tested for HIV. Can you tell me more about the test?"**
- It is important to be honest with your healthcare provider about your life so they can help you best.
- If you feel rushed, you can say to your healthcare provider: **"I know you are busy, but I would like to talk more about this."**
- After your visit, schedule your next check-up.

If the visit didn't go well, find a healthcare provider you feel more comfortable with. Ask someone you trust to recommend a provider they see and like.





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Where should I get tested?

You can get an HIV test at most doctors' offices and healthcare clinics/centers. You can [search online](#) to find a clinic that offers tests near you, or connect with one of our [campaign partner sites](#) throughout the state for HIV testing services.

You can use an HIV self-test, too. It is a safe and simple way to check your HIV status at home or in any private place. You can [order a free self-test kit online](#) or [request a free self-test kit from a New Jersey organization](#). You can also buy one at a pharmacy.

How do I pay for an HIV test?

Most health insurance, including Medicaid and Medicare, will pay for the test at a doctor's office or clinic. Some places offer free and low-cost testing. [Click here](#) for a list of HIV testing sites in New Jersey.

What are HIV tests like?

Some tests use blood from a vein in your arm or a finger prick. Other tests are done by gently swabbing the inside of your mouth (gums). Your healthcare provider can help you choose the right test for you.

Is an HIV self-test right for me?

You can take an HIV test at home.

This might be good if you:

- prefer to test in private
- want to test often
- are comfortable with following the directions
- are prepared to see a doctor for follow-up care if the test is positive

Testing at a clinic or health center might be better if you:

- are feeling symptoms
- have another STD
- are unsure about how you would handle getting a positive result

How long does it take to get the results?

Some tests give results in **20 or 30 minutes**. Other tests may take a few days. Ask your healthcare provider how long it will take to get the results, based on the test you choose.

What happens if I test positive?

If your first HIV test is positive, you will have a follow-up test. If the second test is also positive, it means you have HIV. When you start treatment (taking medicine) early, you can live a long, healthy life. It is important to start treatment right away, even if you don't feel sick.

What happens if I test negative?

If your HIV test is negative, your healthcare providers will talk to you about other ways to protect your health.

If you think you were exposed to HIV recently, you may need to test again to be sure the result is correct. It can take up to 90 days for the virus to show up on some tests. Ask your healthcare provider if you need a follow-up test.

I think I was exposed to HIV in the last 3 days (72 hours). What should I do?

If you think you were exposed to **HIV in the last 3 days (72 hours)**, you should see a doctor or go to the emergency room right away.

- There is a medicine called PEP that can prevent HIV after possible exposure.
- You must start PEP within 72 hours of when you might have been exposed (for example, if a condom broke, if you were sexually assaulted, or if you shared a needle).
- You will be tested for HIV before PEP is started, and there are follow-up HIV tests too.
- You must take this medicine every day for 28 days.

What are other ways I can prevent HIV?

There are many things you can do to help prevent HIV.

- PrEP is a medicine you take before you might be exposed to HIV. PrEP helps lower your chance of getting HIV from sex or drug use. [Click here](#) to learn more.
- Use condoms the correct way every time you have sex.
- Use new, clean needles any time you inject drugs. [Click here](#) for more information.
- Tell your friends and family about HIV testing and why it is important. Everyone should know their HIV status!

Visit endhivnj.org/askforatest for clinical references and more information.