



ASK FOR AN HIV TEST

Make getting an HIV test as routine as other activities

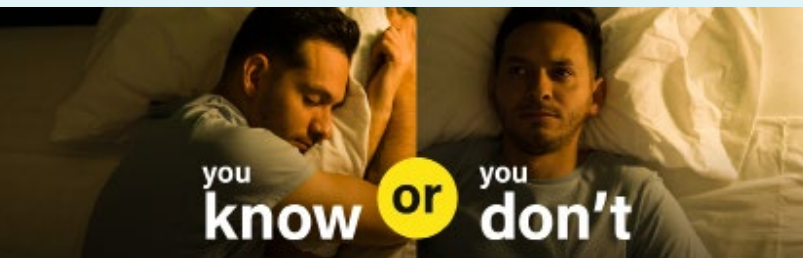
What is HIV?

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

HIV is passed from one person to another through:

- Condomless anal or vaginal sex
- Oral sex
- Sharing needles or other equipment used to inject drugs

A parent with HIV can pass HIV to their baby while they are pregnant, during birth, or through breastfeeding. But there is good news: taking HIV medicine can protect the baby.



Why should I get tested for HIV?

- It's the only way to know: You can't tell if someone has HIV by looking at them. A test is the only way to be sure.
- HIV medicine works: If you have HIV, you can take medicine that lowers the amount of HIV in your body, which helps you stay healthy and live a full life.
- It protects others: If you have HIV, HIV medicine will also prevent you from passing HIV to someone else through condomless sex.

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. 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 STI. **Do not assume; you may need to 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?"**

When should I get an HIV test?

Everyone **over the age of 13** should get an HIV test at least once. Pregnant women should get tested during **each pregnancy.**

You should get an HIV test every 3-6 months if you:

- had a new sex partner since your last HIV test.
- had sex with two or more people since your last test.
- had sex with someone who has HIV and is not taking HIV medications regularly.
- shared a needle or other equipment used to inject drugs.
- have had another STI or hepatitis.
- had sex with someone in exchange for money, food, a place to stay, or drugs.
- aren't sure about the sexual health history of the person you are with. They may have an STI or HIV without any symptoms!

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. If you have questions about taking the self-test or are unsure how to read the results, contact one of our [campaign partner sites](#).

Will I have to pay for an HIV test?

Most health insurance, including Medicaid and Medicare, will pay for the testing at a 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 pick 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:

- Have any symptoms. Learn more [here](#).
- Have or need to be tested for another STI.
- Are unsure about how you would handle getting a positive HIV 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, even if you don't feel sick.

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 early, you can live a long, healthy life. It is important to start treatment right away,

What happens if I test negative?

- If your HIV test is negative, you may be able to use medicine ([PEP](#) or [PrEP](#)) to prevent HIV infection.
- If you think you were HIV exposed (possibly infected) recently, you may need to take a different test to be sure of your HIV status. 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 as soon as possible and within 72 hours of when you might have been exposed (for example, if a condom broke, you had condomless anal or vaginal sex, if you were sexually assaulted, or if you shared a needle).
- You will be tested for HIV before PEP starts and again after taking the medicine every day for 28 days.

What are other ways I can prevent HIV?

There are many ways you can 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. Most health care providers can help you get on PrEP. Ask your health care provider for more information.
- Use condoms the correct way every time you have sex.
- Use new, clean needles every time you inject drugs. Visit the [Harm Reduction Centers](#) for more information.
- U=U. If your sexual partner(s) are living with HIV, encourage them to get healthcare, stay in healthcare, and take their HIV medicines.
- Encourage your friends, partners, and family to get tested too, so that everyone can stay healthy together!

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