

# Sexually Transmitted Infections: HIV Facts



Your Family PACT provider can test you for HIV.

## What is HIV?

HIV is the virus that causes AIDS. People can get it from having sex with someone who has it. HIV harms the immune system. The immune system is how the body fights off infections.

People may not know they have HIV. They may not have symptoms or signs until many years after they get the virus but they can still pass HIV to other people. The only way to know if a person has HIV is to get tested.

Currently, there is no effective cure for HIV. Once people get HIV they have it for life. There is very effective treatment for HIV that can keep the infection in control and people healthy.

## Could I get HIV?

Males and females of all ages can get HIV. You have a higher chance of getting it if:

- You are a man who has had sex with another man.
- You have had vaginal or anal sex with someone who has HIV.
- You or your sex partner have other partners.
- You or your sex partner have shared needles with anyone.
- You have exchanged sex or drugs for money.
- You or your sex partner have a sexually transmitted infection (especially syphilis, gonorrhea, and herpes).

If you think you are at risk, you may want to get an HIV test.

## How do people get HIV?

HIV is spread through semen, blood, vaginal fluid, or breast milk that has the virus in it. This can happen when you:

- Have vaginal or anal sex without a condom. (Oral sex has very low risk for HIV).
- Share injection drug equipment such as needles with someone who has HIV.

It can also be passed from mother to child during pregnancy, birth, or breastfeeding.

You cannot get HIV when you:

- Shake hands.
- Hug.
- Close mouth kiss.
- Get mosquito or other insect bites.
- Share or touch saliva, tears, or sweat.

## Should I get tested for HIV?

**Everyone** should get tested for HIV at least once in their life. After that, if you think there's a chance you could have it, you should get an HIV test at least once a year. Sexually active men who have sex with men may benefit from getting tested more frequently, every 3-6 months.

You can ask for an HIV test from your Family PACT provider or she or he may suggest you get it done. Usually, a blood sample will be drawn and sent to a lab. Some providers have rapid HIV testing in their office and can give you the result in about 20 minutes.

- The test looks for HIV antibodies in your blood or the cells of your mouth. Antibodies are what your body makes to fight off infection.

If you do not want to be tested for HIV, tell your provider. You do not need an HIV test to be in the Family PACT program.

- Your Family PACT provider can answer any questions you may have about HIV and HIV testing.

## What do my test results mean?

If you test **negative**:

- Either you do not have HIV or it is too soon to tell.
- It can take your body as long as 3 months to make HIV antibodies. It may be too soon after you were infected for the antibodies to show up on a test.
- Your Family PACT provider will let you know if you need to get a second test and when to get it.

If you test **positive**:

- Your provider may order a second test to make sure that you have HIV.
- Your provider will talk with you and send you to services that can help you.
- There is treatment for HIV that keeps you healthy and can help reduce the risk that HIV is spread to others.



**I got tested for HIV because I care about my health.**



## Where can I get tested?

- Your Family PACT provider can test you for HIV.
- You can also find testing sites by calling the California STD/HIV hotline at 1-800-367-2437. These sites are private and no one will know who you are.
- To find more HIV services near you, visit the California Office of AIDS website at [www.aidshotline.org](http://www.aidshotline.org).

## Protect yourself from HIV!

- Use a condom every time you have vaginal or anal sex.
- Choose activities with little to no risk like oral sex.
- Limit the number of sex partners you have.
- Do not shoot drugs. If you do, don't share needles, syringes or other drug injection equipment.
- Talk to your provider about prevention (PrEP) or exposure (PEP) for HIV (**PrEP/PEP not covered by Family PACT**).

Get tested and treated for other STDs.

## Resources

To learn more about HIV:

- Call the CDC toll-free hotline at 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636).
- Visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

For more information about the Family PACT program and providers near you:

- Call 1-800-942-1054.
- Visit [www.familypact.org](http://www.familypact.org).

