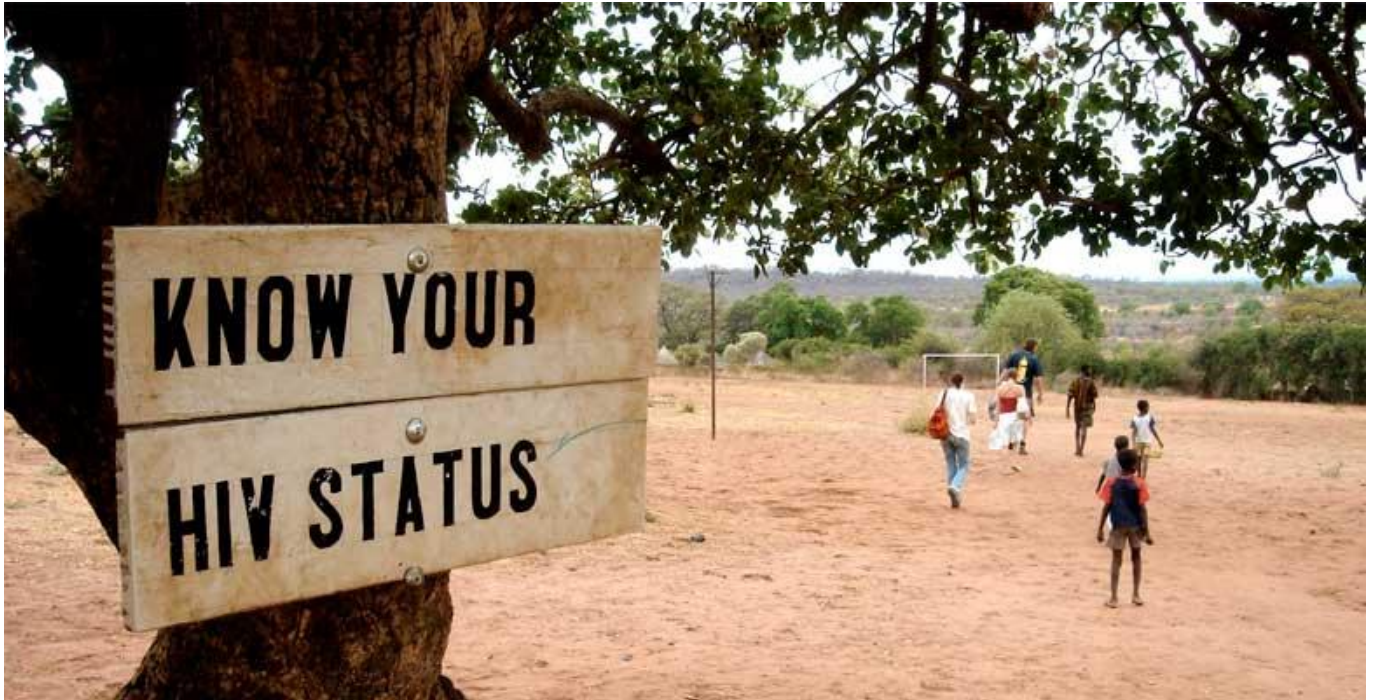


Why get tested for HIV?



FAST FACTS

- Testing is the only way to know for sure if you have HIV.
- Knowing your status means you can keep yourself and your sexual partners healthy.
- Being diagnosed early gives you a better chance of living a long and healthy life.

The only way to tell if you have [HIV](#) is to get tested. A lot of people feel nervous about it, but the reasons to test far outweigh the reasons not to test. We look at the main reasons why you should get tested.

Do I need to get tested for HIV?

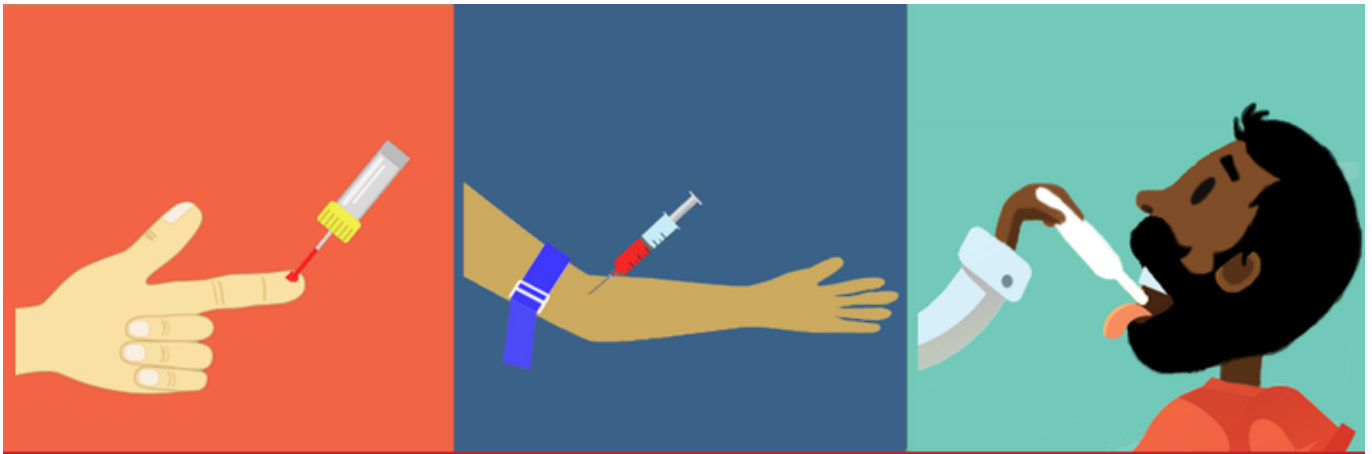
You should get tested if you've:

- had [sex without a condom](#)
- shared needles when [injecting drugs](#)
- put yourself at risk of HIV in any other way or are worried you might have.

Even if you haven't recently put yourself at risk of infection, making HIV testing part of your sexual health routine is a good habit to get into for a number of reasons...

It's quick and easy

Getting an HIV test is quick, easy and almost always free. It's also the only way to know for sure whether or not you have been infected and [involves a quick saliva or blood test](#).



An HIV test is done by taking blood from the finger or arm, or by an oral swab.

It's always better to know

Testing is the only way to know if you have HIV. It's normal to feel [worried about HIV](#), but testing for HIV can help put your mind at ease and reduce the anxiety of not knowing.

Whether your result is negative, or positive, it's always better to know so that you can move on with your life, or start treatment if necessary. And remember, your result may not be what you expect.

A positive result means you can access treatment

If you do have HIV, being diagnosed at an early stage means that you have a better chance of living a long and healthy life. This is because HIV attacks your immune system. If you're diagnosed early, you can start HIV treatment (antiretroviral drugs) earlier. This will lower the levels of HIV in your body, protect your immune system from damage, and stop you getting ill.

With the right [treatment](#) and care, people [living with HIV](#) can expect to live as long as the average person, so it's important to take control of your health by getting a test.

Testing means you can keep your sexual partners healthy

Testing for HIV regularly, and knowing your status, means that you can look after the sexual health of your partners too. If you're positive, you can prevent HIV from being transmitted to your partner by [using condoms](#).

Also, by starting and staying on antiretroviral treatment you will reduce the levels of HIV in your body, making it less likely you will pass HIV on. With effective antiretroviral treatment it's possible the level of virus in your body will go so low it becomes 'undetectable'. If this is confirmed by your healthcare professional it means you can no longer pass on HIV through sex.

If you find out you're positive, you can also encourage your partners to get tested.

Is HIV testing ever mandatory?

Because choosing to take an HIV test can be hugely beneficial for yourself and your loved ones, the decision to test should be yours alone to make.

However, some countries require you to get an HIV test in order to enter the country. For further information about countries that have travel restriction, please see the [Global Database on HIV travel](#).

In addition, some insurance companies and employers such as the armed forces may require you to test for HIV. You should always seek advice from a healthcare professional first if you are unsure.

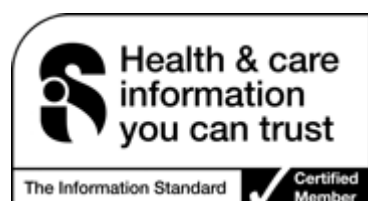
AVERT does not support mandatory testing for HIV. HIV testing should be given with full consent and proper support to yourself, unless in the case of blood donor screening and organ donation.

REMEMBER, HIV TESTING SHOULD...

- ✓ involve your full consent
- ✓ be confidential
- ✓ give you an opportunity to speak to a professional about what's involved
- ✓ give you an HIV-positive or negative result
- ✓ depending on your results, give you information on further treatment and prevention services

Read on to find out: [When to get tested?](#)

Photo by *Jon Rawlinson/ CC BY 2.0*



Sources:

THT (2014) 'Testing for HIV' [Accessed June 6th, 2015]

Aidsmap 'HIV Testing' [Accessed June 6th, 2015]

CDC (2015) 'HIV Testing' [Accessed June 6th, 2015]

Last full review: 22 September 2017

Next full review: 22 September 2020

Last updated: 30 January 2019