

What happens after an HIV test and getting the results?



FAST FACTS

- If your result is negative, you can stop worrying – but it's good to keep testing regularly.
- If your result is positive or '**reactive**', you will need to give a blood sample to have your results confirmed.
- Remember that HIV is now a manageable illness – if you do test positive you can start treatment which will keep you healthy.

[Deciding to have an HIV test](#) is often the hardest step to take, but it is usually not as bad as you imagine.

How do I get my results?

Depending on the [type of test](#) you take, you will have to wait either a few minutes for your results (rapid test or self-testing), or anywhere between a couple of days or weeks (laboratory test). Your healthcare professional should explain how you will get your test results. If you are self-testing, there will be information on how to read your results with your test kit.

If your result is negative, the health centre will contact you to let you know that you tested negative. All positive and '**reactive**' results will have to be checked again, so you will be asked to come back for further testing.

If you get a positive result after using a self-test kit you will need to go to a healthcare clinic.

What does a negative result mean?

If your HIV test result comes back negative it means that the test hasn't found signs of HIV infection.

However, if you have been at risk since your last test then you'll need to test again. Also remember that [most HIV tests](#) can only detect HIV one to three months after exposure. If you were at risk more recently than this you will need to test again to be sure that your results are accurate.

Using a [condom](#) (and [injecting safely](#) if you use drugs) is the best way to protect yourself from HIV.

Be aware that testing negative for HIV doesn't mean that your partners are HIV-negative. HIV tests only apply to the person who took the test. If any of your previous or current partners are [worried about HIV](#), encourage them to take a test.

What does a 'reactive' test result mean?

A reactive test result is a possible positive result, but means that you will need to go back to test again to confirm this. The healthcare worker will talk you through everything you need to know and help you with any worries that you may have.

You will need to give blood sample, which will then be sent to the lab for testing. At this stage, it's very important to follow the advice of the healthcare professional.

What does a positive test result mean?

If you receive an HIV-positive result, the healthcare worker will talk to you about what this means and what will happen next. For most people, receiving a positive diagnosis can be a shocking and emotional experience - this is completely normal. The healthcare worker is there to support you and to answer any questions that you have.

[Treatment](#) means that HIV is now a manageable illness. Your healthcare provider can link you to support and treatment services, and any other health services that you need. Any questions that you have you can ask them - it's their job to help answer your worries. You will most likely be asked to schedule another appointment with them in the very near future. It's very important to keep appointments and use the support offered to you. You may also be offered screening tests for other [sexually transmitted infections \(STIs\)](#) such as [chlamydia](#), [gonorrhoea](#) and [syphilis](#).

Find out what questions to ask and what support is available to help you cope with the results on our ['Newly diagnosed'](#) page.

It has almost been eight months since I was diagnosed with HIV. I was confused, ashamed, I kept asking, 'How this could be?'. Slowly but surely I'm beginning to accept that HIV is going to be a part of

me and I definitely have control over it.

- Raya

Will my test results be kept private?

Your test results should remain 100% confidential between you and those who are involved in your care and treatment. You can talk to your healthcare professional about your rights and get advice on [how to tell other people](#) if and when you are ready.

Will my partner have the same results as me?

Don't assume that if you are positive, or negative, your partner will have the same result. It may be that your partner has a different test result to you. This is why it's a good idea to encourage your partner to get tested too, whether your results are positive or negative. If you're worried about telling your partner that you are positive or asking them to take a test, speak to your healthcare advisor. They can often help you with ways to do this.

HELP US HELP OTHERS

Avert.org is helping to prevent the spread of HIV and improve sexual health by giving people trusted, up-to date information.

We provide all this for FREE, but it takes time and money to keep Avert.org going.

[Can you support us and protect our future?](#)

Every contribution helps, no matter how small.

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Next full review:

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Sources:

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