

VA HIV Testing Information for Veterans

Fact Sheet | December 2013

www.hiv.va.gov

Who should get an HIV test?

- › Public health experts recommend that all adults get tested for HIV as part of their routine medical care.
- › Everyone—not just people who think they are at risk—should be tested.

Why should I get an HIV test?

- › An HIV test is the only way to be certain about your HIV status.
- › A person with HIV could show no symptoms for years, but could still pass the virus on to others.
- › Like many other diseases, it is better to diagnose and treat HIV early rather than late.
- › There have been many advances in the treatment of HIV. As a result, people with HIV often live much longer and healthier lives than before.
- › The earlier HIV is detected, the sooner a person can receive excellent care provided by VA and begin taking steps to remain healthy for years to come.

What does the test involve?

- › HIV testing within VA is voluntary and confidential. It is up to you to decide whether you want to be tested.
- › Before deciding, you will be given educational materials on HIV and HIV testing. VA also encourages you to ask your provider any questions you may have.
- › If you give your consent to be tested, an HIV test will be done with either a sample of blood or fluid (saliva) from inside your mouth. For the blood test, blood is drawn either from an arm or from a finger with a needlestick. For the oral-fluid test, a swab is used to brush the inside of your mouth.



TAKE THE TEST, TAKE CONTROL

Even if you do not think you are at risk, talk to your provider about taking the HIV test.

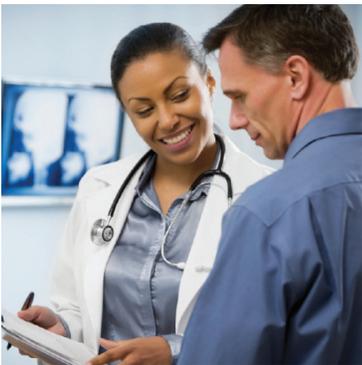




- > The type of test you can get depends on what is offered by your VA facility.
- > Traditional blood test results are available in 1-2 weeks. Some facilities offer rapid tests that provide preliminary results in around 20 minutes. However, all positive results with the rapid test will require confirmation with a blood test.

Can having an HIV test affect my VA Benefits?

- > Your HIV test result will not affect your VA care or your eligibility for VA benefits.
- > You have the right to refuse HIV testing without losing medical benefits or any right to care.



Where can I find more information?

- > www.hiv.va.gov

