

HIV TESTING FOR VETERANS

KNOW THE FACTS, GET TESTED



WHO SHOULD GET A 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 A HIV TEST?

Almost 1 in 8 people with HIV don't know they're infected.

- **Know Your Status:** A person with HIV could show no symptoms for years, but could still pass the virus on to others. A HIV test is the only way to be certain about your HIV status.
- **Get Care:** Like many other diseases, it is better to diagnose and treat HIV early rather than late. The earlier HIV is detected, the sooner a person can receive treatment and begin taking steps to remain healthy for years to come.
- **Stay in Care:** 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.

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.
- Getting tested is simple, just ask your VA provider for a HIV test at your next appointment.
- VA encourages you to ask your provider any questions you may have. Educational materials will be provided upon request.
- If you give your consent to be tested, a 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.
- 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.

WILL A 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.

★ DOING IT. TESTING FOR HIV.

Even if you do not think you are at risk, talk to your provider about taking a HIV test. It can save your life.

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