



# Counselor Fact Sheet

## HIV Testing

### Why get tested for HIV?

- Peace of mind.
- Access to treatment.
- It's quick, easy, and free.
- Protecting your partner or unborn baby from HIV infection.

### The Steps of an HIV Test

#### *1. Talk and plan*

Talk to your partner about going for HIV testing. This should be part of your regular health plan, just like checking your blood pressure and testing your eye sight.

#### *2. Go to the testing site*

When you or you and your partner arrive at the health centre, a professional counselor will take you to a private room for a private discussion called counseling. Your discussion will not be shared with or listened to by anybody else.

#### *3. Get pre-counseling*

The counselor will begin with a pre-testing counseling session. During this session, the counselor will explain the testing process to you and answer any questions, worries or doubts that you and your partner may have. You are free to share any information and ask any questions to the counselor, he or she is there to help you.

#### *4. Get the test*

To test you for HIV, the counselor will prick your finger with a small needle to collect a very small blood sample. The blood sample will then be placed on a piece of testing paper. The chemicals on the paper will react with your blood and determine whether you are HIV positive or negative. The results will be ready within 2 minutes of the test.

#### *5. Get your results*

The counselor will discuss with you and your partner the meaning of positive and negative test results. The counselor will then give both of you your results. If you test positive, the counselor will advise you on how to access treatment. If you test negative, the counselor will advise you on how to maintain your status. Again at this point, you are free to ask the counselor any questions you or your partner may have.





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## *Both of you are negative*

- Plan how you and your partner will maintain your HIV negative status.
- Go back for another test after 3 months to confirm your status. You may test HIV negative when you are still in the window period.
- The window period is a time ranging from 3-12 weeks after a person has been exposed to HIV. During this time the HIV test cannot yet detect if you are HIV positive.

## *Both of you are positive*

- It is still possible to lead a healthy life when you are HIV positive. You can do this by using condoms whenever you have sex with your partner to prevent possible reinfection and mixing of different HIV types.
- If you choose to have sex with anybody else besides your partner, you must also use a condom to prevent them from getting infected with HIV.

## *One of you is positive, the other negative*

- This is known as discordance. Discordant couples can still have healthy and happy lives together. Ask the counsellor for specific tips on how you and your partner can remain healthy.
- Using condoms during sex will play an important role to prevent the person who is negative from becoming HIV positive. Remember that if your partner is found positive, this does not automatically mean they have been unfaithful.

## **HIV Testing Centers**

- You can get a free HIV test done at most government clinics and private clinics.

## **What an HIV Test CANNOT Tell**

- How the person became infected with HIV.
- How long the person has been living with HIV.
- Who infected the person with HIV.
- How long it will take for an individual to fall sick with and opportunistic infection.

\* For more information refer to the 990 Counsellor's Reference Guide

