



# 4 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW

HIV TESTING AND RESULTS



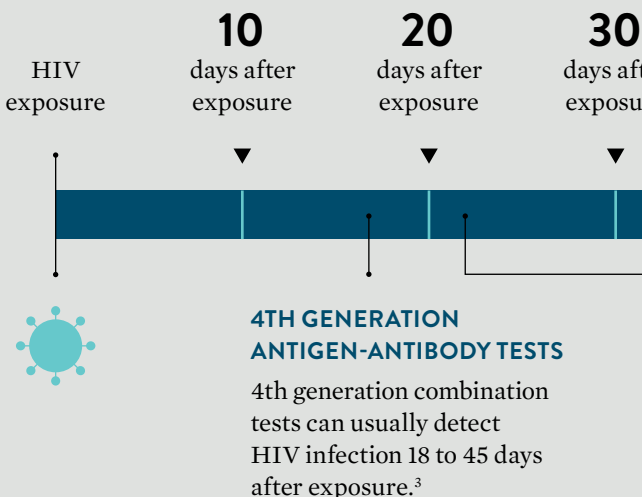
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## FOR YOU AND FOR OTHERS

The HIV virus itself is not life-threatening, but without early treatment and proper medication, it can lead to AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome) which is the most advanced stage of HIV disease.<sup>1</sup> The only way to know if you have the virus is to be tested.

If you are found to have the HIV virus, you can then receive treatment to reduce the risk of transmission to others—and to control the virus to give yourself a healthier and longer life.<sup>2</sup>

## TIME PERIOD WHEN HIV CAN BE DETECTED



## 2

### HOW SOON CAN HIV BE DETECTED?

When a person is exposed to HIV, it may take several weeks for the antigen (the virus), or for antibodies to become detectable.

This is known as the “window period.”<sup>3</sup> A person could have the virus and be infectious but still test negative.<sup>3</sup>

Testing methods have improved greatly over the past two decades, and now there are combination tests to more accurately detect both the antigen and antibodies sooner, known as 4<sup>th</sup> generation tests.

ter re	<b>40</b> days after exposure	<b>50</b> days after exposure	<b>60</b> days after exposure	<b>7</b> days exp
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#### RAPID ANTIBODY-ONLY TESTS

These tests usually take 23 to 90 days to reliably detect HIV infection after exposure.<sup>3</sup>

## HIV TESTING METHODS

Traditional screening tests for HIV involve a sample of blood taken from a vein, are usually performed by the laboratory, and may take several days to receive results. There are also rapid screening tests which use blood from a finger prick or oral fluid and can provide results in up to 20 minutes.

Whether traditional or rapid, all preliminary positive screening tests should be confirmed with further tests.

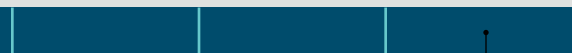
70

days after  
exposure

80

days after  
exposure

90+

days after  
exposure

### OLDER GENERATION ANTIBODY-ONLY TESTS

It can take 90 days or more after exposure for your body to produce levels of antibodies to be detected by older generation tests.<sup>3</sup>

## HIV TEST RESULTS

Rapid screening test results are reported as negative or preliminary positive.

### NEGATIVE RESULT

If you have a negative rapid screening test, you are unlikely to be infected with HIV. If you think you may have recently been exposed to the HIV virus, you should be retested.

- If an antigen-antibody test is negative, follow-up testing should be performed 45 days after the exposure.<sup>3</sup>
- If an antibody-only test is negative, repeat HIV testing should occur at least 90 days following exposure.<sup>3</sup>

### PRELIMINARY POSITIVE RESULT

If you have a preliminary positive rapid screening test, the result needs to be confirmed with further tests. All preliminary positive screening results must be confirmed as there is a slight chance false positives may occur. False positive test results may happen due to technical issues associated with the test or biological causes such as participation in an HIV vaccine study, autoimmune disorders and other medical conditions.<sup>3-4</sup>

“Every time someone gets tested for HIV, we are one step closer to ending the AIDS epidemic. Learning your HIV status opens the door to powerful HIV prevention and treatment options that could save your life or the life of someone you love.”

JONATHAN MERMIN, MD, MPH DIRECTOR  
OF THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR HIV/AIDS,  
VIRAL HEPATITIS, STD, AND TB PREVENTION

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

### References

1. Stages of HIV Infection. AIDSinfo. Department of Health and Human Services. <https://aidsinfo.nih.gov/understanding-hiv-aids/fact-sheets/19/46/the-stages-of-hiv-infection>. Accessed October 19, 2018.
2. About HIV/AIDS. Centers for Disease Control. <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/basics/whatishiv.html>. Accessed October 19, 2018.
3. HIV Basics: Testing. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/basics/testing.html>. Accessed July 2, 2018.
4. False-Positive HIV Test Results. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/pdf/testing/cdc-hiv-factsheet-false-positive-test-results.pdf>. Accessed October 19, 2018.

### HIV Testing and Results

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