

HIV Detection Test

**You are an Aboriginal person...
then HIV/AIDS concerns you too!**

HIV is being spread at an alarming rate among our First Nations and Inuit sisters and brothers. In Canada, the transmission rate among First Nations is higher than in the general population. The number of new cases each year of HIV/AIDS is increasing in aboriginal communities, contrary to the trend in the general population, where it is stabilizing. HIV attacks the immune system and eventually leads to AIDS, a deadly disease against which there is currently no known vaccine or definitive cure.

How HIV is transmitted

- **Through non-protected sexual relations** (vaginal, anal or oral, without a condom). If you have unprotected sex, you are potentially exposing yourself to other sexually transmitted infections and diseases, such as chlamydia, gonorrhoea and hepatitis B.
- **Through blood contact** (anyone who received a blood transfusion or blood product before November 1985 should think about being tested).
- **Through used needles and syringes, tattooing with non-sterilized needles, and body piercing.** It is important to know that the hepatitis C virus is also easily spread in these ways.
- **From a pregnant mother to her child, during birth or afterwards through the mother's milk.**

How can I protect others and myself?

You can prevent HIV infection by always using a condom as protection during sex. Using the female or male condom provides the best protection. The contraceptive pill prevents pregnancy but does not provide protection against HIV or other sexually transmitted diseases.

If you take drugs, you must protect yourself against HIV and hepatitis C. **Never share needles or other accessories** (such as water, filters, warmer dishes, pipes or straws). There are places that will exchange used needles for new ones. If you cannot find new needles, you must disinfect used injectors at least twice in undiluted bleach. Remember to rinse your syringe before reusing it.

If you are pregnant, you should know that new treatments are now available. If administered correctly to pregnant women and their babies, they almost always **prevent transmission of HIV from mother to child.**

In case of doubt...

If you have ever been in a risky situation, you should **GO FOR AN HIV DETECTION TEST**. In certain cases, it may be important to also go for a STD (sexually transmittable diseases) test. If you have ever injected drugs or sniffed substances, even if it was only once, you should be tested for hepatitis C.

HIV detection test: what's that?

The HIV test is a blood test that shows whether or not you are HIV-positive (i.e. whether or not you are carrying the virus). It works by looking for HIV antibodies in your blood. Your body produces antibodies if the virus enters your system. You can think of HIV antibodies as "soldiers" that your body produces to try to fight against the HIV virus. The HIV test is not compulsory, and nobody can force you to take it.

When should the test be taken?

Generally speaking, you should wait a minimum of three months after exposure before being tested. Your body needs about three months to produce enough antibodies to be detected by the test. In some people, the process may take even longer.

Why should the test be taken?

If you discover that you are HIV-positive, you can:

- Get treated quickly and remain healthy
- Get treated if you are pregnant, to reduce the risk of transmitting the disease to your baby
- Take precautions to make sure you do not infect anyone else
- Consult resources that will teach you how to live with HIV
- Receive protection from the law, which prevents discrimination and harassment
- Obtain help if you want to inform past sexual partners

Where can the test be taken?

You can take the test in your community Health Centre. There are also places available such as CLSC's or anonymous testing clinics. In certain cities, some Native Friendship Centres have resource people who will direct you to the closest place for a screening test. For details of the nearest anonymous screening centre, call 1-866-521-7432.

In total confidence and confidentiality

You may talk about your situation with a doctor, a nurse, a social worker or any other health professional who will answer your questions.

How does the test take place?

When you take the HIV screening test, you will have an opportunity to meet with a health professional who will answer your questions about HIV, STDs and hepatitis. This person will take a small sample of your blood, which will then be sent to a laboratory. The laboratory will analyze your blood to see if it contains HIV antibodies. The results take from two to six weeks.

When the results are negative...

Assuming you haven't taken any further risks after the blood test and you waited six months after a risky situation before taking the test, the negative result indicates that you don't have HIV. **But you MUST continue to use protection!**

When the results are positive...

That means that you do have HIV. You must then talk to a doctor who will be able to help you and give you advice. You and your doctor can then choose the appropriate care and treatment for you. Your doctor will inform you of the numerous community resources at your disposal.

**IF YOU NEED TO TALK ABOUT
HIV/AIDS OR IF YOU NEED
SUPPORT, CALL THE AIDS
INFORMATION LINE:
1-866-521-7432**



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Health and Social Services Commission**
250, Place Michel Laveau, Wendake, Qc G0A 4V0
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