

Are you considering an HIV test?

Make an informed
decision.



BC Centre for Disease Control

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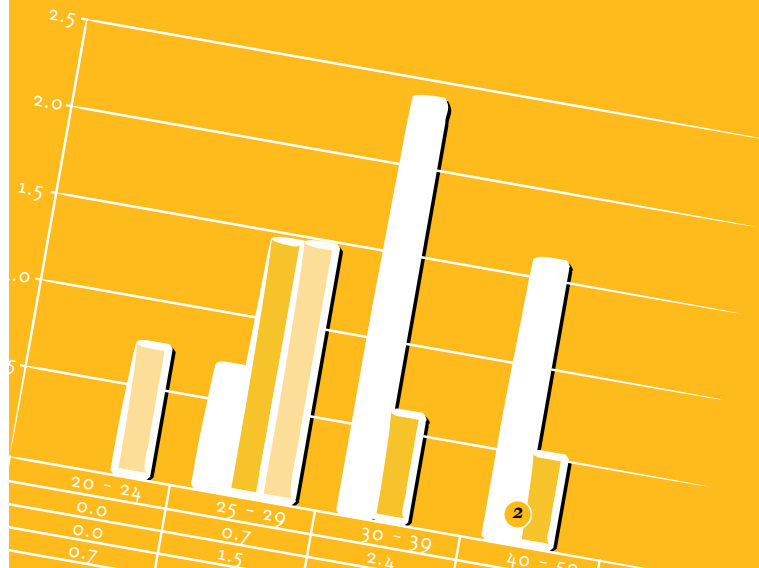


confidential

HIV is a reportable disease in British Columbia. If your test is positive, your result will be reported locally to Public Health.

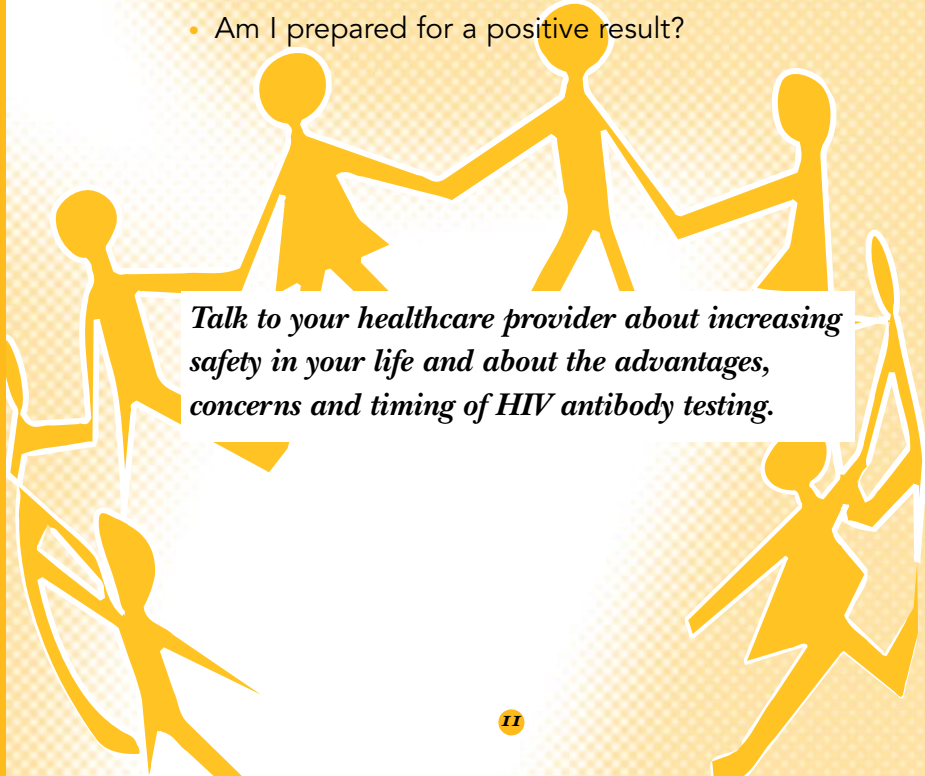
All persons testing for HIV must be offered the choice between the nominal option (using their name) or the non-nominal option (using initials).

A public health nurse (or personal healthcare provider) will follow up each new HIV case to provide assistance with the voluntary process of partner notification.



Before testing for HIV, ask yourself the following questions:

- Who can I count on to support me while I am waiting for my results?
- **If I test HIV negative**, how can I reduce my higher risk activities to remain negative?
- **If my test result is positive**, do I have a supportive family member or friend I could tell? Will that person keep the information confidential? Do I have a doctor who can provide me with a medical assessment?
- Which sexual or drug sharing partners would I need to notify?
- Am I prepared for a positive result?



Talk to your healthcare provider about increasing safety in your life and about the advantages, concerns and timing of HIV antibody testing.

Suggestions for reducing your risk of getting infected with HIV.

Identify your personal, higher risk activities (the situations which place you at an increased risk for an HIV infection).

Ask yourself:

Am I protecting myself sexually?

- Do I consistently use latex or polyurethane condoms?
- Do I have a lot of sexual partners?
- Do I feel comfortable discussing sexual risks (prior risks and current risks) with all of my partner(s)?

reducing
risk



How HIV affects your body:

HIV targets a person's immune system and destroys the cells which are responsible for recognizing and fighting infections.

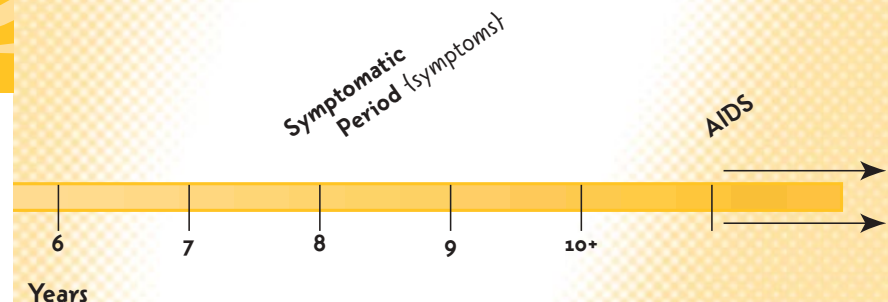
A person infected with HIV can infect others.

When initially infected a person may experience severe flu-like symptoms (**Period of Sero-conversion**).

For the first few years after infection, the immune system continues to function and a person may not realize they are infected. (**Asymptomatic Period**).

Eventually the immune system becomes so weakened it can no longer defend the body against diseases. At this time an HIV positive person begins to develop symptoms. (**Symptomatic Period**).

A diagnosis of **AIDS** occurs when an HIV positive person is diagnosed with certain HIV related disorders (diseases).



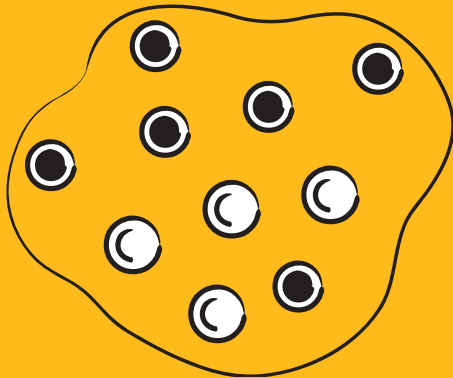
What is an HIV antibody test? What can it tell you?

When someone is infected with HIV, their body makes HIV antibodies. It can take from 6 weeks to 6 months (the window period) for the body to make a sufficient number of detectable antibodies.

If there are no HIV antibodies in your blood:

The result is negative (non reactive)

- You may be in the window period. If you think you may have been exposed to HIV in the six months preceding the test you should test again in 3-6 months.

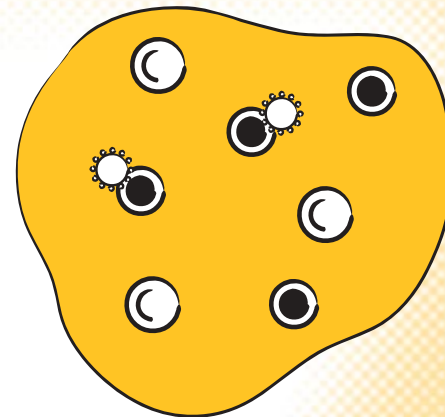


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If HIV antibodies are found in your blood:

The result is positive (reactive)

- This means you have been infected with HIV.
- People that you have had unprotected sex with or shared drug using equipment with may also be at risk of infections.



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Make a plan to discuss your decision(s) with all of your partners. Your risk reduction plan might include:

A decision to always have on hand a good supply of latex or polyurethane condoms.

Consider when are you most likely to have unsafe sex (ie) when high, when you are out of condoms or when you feel uncomfortable bringing the subject of condoms up.

Find out how you can obtain clean needles and syringes locally and think about ways you can reduce the likelihood of having to borrow or lend rigs.



Test for HIV before starting a family.

Consider testing for other sexually transmitted infections. *The presence of sexually transmitted infections can increase your risk of picking up HIV and of passing HIV along to others if and when you become infected.*

“An active, supported partner notification system, using trained, skilled professionals to help physicians and patients, can identify up to seven times more contacts than a system where this level of assistance is not provided. The partners who are notified are at high risk and have been shown to have HIV positive rates on testing of between 15% and 30%. Women who know they are HIV positive and who are considering pregnancy can seek information about existing medical treatments which can lower the chances of passing HIV to unborn children”

Dr. Perry Kendall, Provincial Health Officer



Early detection of HIV provides newly infected persons the opportunity to access timely medical assessment and support and to take steps to receive assistance in reducing high risk behaviors.

Some Facts About HIV:

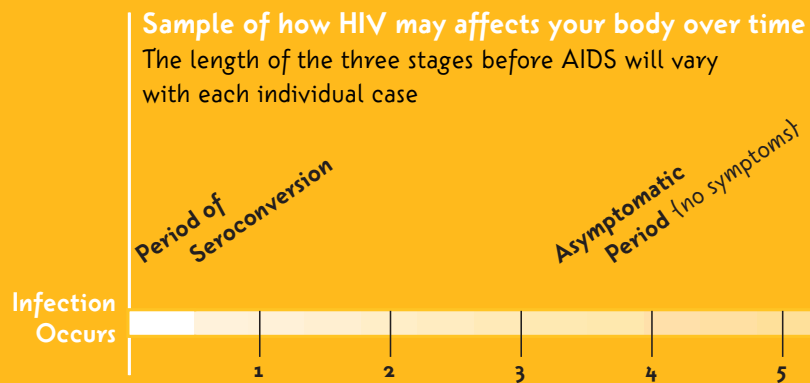
HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is the virus responsible for the disease AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome).

HIV can pass from person to person:

- by unprotected sexual contact (vaginal, anal and oral sex),
- by the sharing of drug using equipment
- through direct blood to blood contact (transfusion, needle stick accidents),
- during pregnancy, at birth or via breast milk – from an infected mother to a baby

Sample of how HIV may affects your body over time

The length of the three stages before AIDS will vary with each individual case



Am I injecting safely?

- Am I always using clean needles?
- Do I ever share any drug using equipment?
- How can I talk to the people I inject with to make the situation safer?

Determine which risks you are prepared to live with.

Decide the best way to change the risks which you have identified make you worry.

Make a plan to negotiate reducing risk with your sex partners or injecting partners.

