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Patient Information Sheet For HIV Testing in Medical Settings

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During your health care visit today your medical care provider may include a HIV test as part of your routine health care. HIV testing is being offered to everyone and is an important part of your health care. The following are answers to questions that people often have about HIV and the test.

What is HIV?

Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) causes a disease that weakens the immune system. HIV makes it hard for the body to fight infections.

How is HIV transmitted?

HIV is spread by the exchange of certain body fluids. HIV is spread by having unprotected sex or sharing needles with an HIV-infected person.

What is an HIV test?

An HIV test can determine if your body is producing HIV, antibodies or antigens. A conventional HIV test is a test using blood drawn from your body. A rapid HIV test uses blood from a finger stick, or saliva from a cheek swab.

What is routine opt-out HIV testing?

Routine, opt-out HIV testing is now part of your medical visits. HIV tests are offered to everyone. You will get a HIV test unless you tell your medical care provider that you decline the test.

When can I expect to get my HIV test result?

Test results can be ready in 20 minutes with a rapid HIV test and two weeks with a conventional HIV test. When receiving your test result, your medical care provider is required to ensure you receive timely information and, if appropriate, counseling, to explain your test result.

You may receive your test results before your leave the office. If that is not possible, your medical care provider may provide you with your results in person, by mail, or by telephone.

What if I test positive?

If you test positive, your medical care provider is required to inform you that there are several treatment options and identify follow up testing and care, if recommended, including contact information for medical and psychological services.

What if I test negative?

If you test negative, and are at high risk for HIV, your medical care provider will advise you of the need for regular re-testing. They may also offer you prevention counseling or give you a referral to prevention counseling.

Your medical care provider will explain the limits of current testing methods and explain the window period. When a person becomes infected with HIV, it takes time for an HIV test to be positive. The time it takes between infection and when an HIV test is positive is referred to as the window period. The length of the window period is different for each type of test and can be from 10 to 90 days.

How can I protect myself and others from HIV?

Use a male or female latex [condom](#) every time you have sex. Use only water-based lubricants. Oil-based lubricants will make condoms less effective.

Do not share needles for tattooing or piercing or for injecting drugs, steroids or vitamins. Click [here](#) to find resources for syringe exchange programs in your area. For information about non-prescription syringe and needles, click [here](#).

Resources:

- [California Department of Public Health/Office of AIDS](#)
- [California HIV Services Referral Website](#)
- Clark Marshall, Expanded HIV Testing Coordinator, Office of AIDS by phone at (916) 650-6752 or by e-mail at: clark.marshall@cdph.ca.gov