

## Facts for Life

- HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus, the virus that leads to AIDS.
- AIDS stands for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome.
- Testing is the only sure way to know if you are infected with HIV.
- A person infected with HIV may have no symptoms but can still infect others.
- HIV is spread through unprotected sex or sharing needles with an infected person.
- To avoid HIV infection through sex, don't have sex, or have sex only with one partner who isn't infected and who only has sex with you.
- Using condoms consistently and correctly greatly reduces the risk of HIV infection.
- If you use needles to inject any substance into your body, use a clean needle every time.
- If you inject drugs, use clean works every time.
- An infected woman can pass HIV to her baby during pregnancy, birth or breastfeeding.
- Donating blood is safe.
- HIV is not spread through hugs, handshakes or simple (closed mouth) kisses.

## Should I be tested?

You should consider taking an HIV antibody test if you...

- are a man who has sex with other men;
- have shared injection needles or equipment;
- have had sex with one or more partners whose sex and drug-using behaviors are unknown to you;
- have had sex with someone who is infected with HIV or who falls into one of the above groups;
- you (or your partner) are pregnant or considering pregnancy; or
- you have never been tested for HIV.



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# HIV

COUNSELING  
&  
TESTING



AIDS  
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## Why is HIV testing important?

The only way to tell if you've been infected with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), is to be tested. While there is no cure for HIV, early medical intervention and treatment can slow the effects of the virus and enable you to stay healthier longer.

## What is an HIV antibody test?

It is a blood test that can determine whether antibodies to HIV are present in a person's body. Antibodies are produced after infection with HIV.

## How is HIV antibody testing done?

The HIV antibody testing is done in three steps, after pre-test counseling, a blood or oral sample is taken and the test is completed in fifteen minutes. If the result of the test is positive for HIV antibodies, a second test is performed and sent to a lab for confirmation of results.

## What does a negative test mean?

A negative result means that no HIV antibodies were detected in your blood at that time. However, HIV antibodies may not be detectable for three months after infection. If you engage in behaviors that could spread the virus within three months of having the test, you should be retested. A negative result does not mean you are immune to HIV. There is no immunity to HIV.

## What does a positive test mean?

A positive test result means HIV antibodies were found. This means you are infected with the virus and can pass HIV to others—even if you have no symptoms. There is no cure for HIV but there are medications that help people stay healthier longer. Prompt medical care can help you live a longer life and prevent some life threatening conditions. It is important that you see a doctor so your health can be evaluated.

## What kind of counseling is provided?

Individuals receive information on how HIV is spread and how it affects the body. The counseling helps them to determine whether they should be tested. If a person tests positive for HIV, they will be counseled about treatment options and about how to avoid spreading the virus. If the test is negative, a counselor will help them develop a prevention plan that will reduce the risk of contracting HIV.

Counseling and testing is available through the AIDS Ministry Network of Disciples Home Missions:  
1-800-346-2631

Other testing sites may be found on the web at [www.hivtest.org](http://www.hivtest.org) or by calling 1-800-CDC-INFO.

