

Before your HIV test

Description:

You have asked or been advised to have a blood test for HIV. You must give informed consent for this test to be done. This means you need to understand the following information.

Tips

What does a positive test mean?

A positive test result means that you have been infected with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). It does not mean that you have AIDS. Drugs are now available to treat HIV and delay the progression to AIDS for many years. You should think about what a positive test would mean for you before you consent to testing - all aspects of your life may be affected, including your relationships, your work and your eligibility for some new insurance policies.

What does a negative test mean?

An HIV test does not become positive for 6-12 weeks after you have been infected. A negative test means that you did not acquire HIV prior to the last 3 months. If you have become infected within the last 3 months, the test may still be negative. A negative test does not mean that you can't be infected in future if you engage in risk-taking behaviour such as unsafe sex or sharing needles.

Practical Advice

Under the Public Health Act 2005, HIV is a notifiable disease. This means that a positive test result is automatically forwarded to Queensland Health by the laboratory so that steps can be taken to prevent further spread of the infection. If you wish, you may ask your doctor to use the recommended code rather than your name on the laboratory request form. This is quite legal and protects your privacy - only your doctor can link the test result with you, although she or he may be required to reveal your details to Queensland Health in exceptional circumstances. Queensland Health has a legal responsibility to prevent the spread of diseases in the community.

Protecting other people - contact tracing

If your test result is positive, you will be asked to provide details of your sexual partners and any persons with whom you have shared injecting equipment. This is so that they can be informed of the risk and can be tested too. This is always done without mentioning your name or identifying you in any way. Your doctor may ask you about contacts or ask a specialist nurse from a sexual health service to help with the contact tracing. The nurses are very experienced, and any information received by them is kept in a secure place which is not accessible to other departments within Queensland Health or to the police. It is against the law for you to put at risk other people who do not know that you are infected.

Other Resources

- [Queensland Health Sexual Health Website](#)
- [Queensland Positive People website](#)
- [Queensland Association of Healthy Communities website](#)

Related Content

[HIV and AIDS fact sheet](#)

[Safe Sex fact sheet](#)

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