

How often should you get tested for HIV? - HIV testing, part 3

Once

Between the ages of 13 and 64 everyone should get tested for HIV at least once as part of routine health care.

At least once a year

For people with certain risk factors such as sexual risks or use of injected substances, as long as these risks continue.



Two to three times a year

For people who have very high risk behaviors, such as having multiple partners, not using condoms, using illegal drugs, and sharing needles.



When should you get tested for HIV?

If you think you might have been exposed to HIV, get tested. But testing right away may not pick up early HIV infection.

If you have an HIV test soon after infection, it may not show that you have been infected with HIV. That is because some HIV tests look for antibodies, the body's natural immune response to a foreign invader. Your body may not have made any antibodies to HIV yet.

If you get HIV, your body will usually begin to develop antibodies within three to twelve weeks. The time between being exposed to HIV and developing antibodies is called the "window period".

There are newer HIV tests available that can tell whether you are HIV-positive early after exposure to the virus. One of the newer tests looks for the virus itself by testing for viral load, which is the amount of HIV in your blood. This test can detect HIV within 9 to 11 days after exposure to the virus.

Be sure to get answers to any questions you have about HIV/AIDS. Your public health department, health care provider, and public library can help.



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