

You have to ask for and agree to have an HIV test before the test can be done. You won't be tested for HIV when you have other blood tests. It is illegal to test for HIV without your permission.

It takes a while for HIV antibodies to show up in your blood. For an accurate test result you should wait about 3 months from the day you think you may have been infected to get tested.



“What do I tell my husband or partner if I decide to get tested?”

Talking to a partner about HIV testing may be difficult because he/she may think you don't trust him/her, or that you have been having sex with other people. If you are tested anonymously only you will know the results. Then you can decide when and how to tell your partner.

Take the time you need to think about how you want to raise the subject with your partner. You may want to speak with a friend before your test, or have your doctor speak to him/her and explain that all pregnant women are being offered the test.



“Do I have to have an HIV test to get my immigration papers?”

You may be asked to have an HIV test as part of the medical. If you refuse the test you won't pass the medical. If the test is positive your application may be turned down. Speak to a lawyer before you have the medical so you know all your options.



“What if I am HIV positive?”

Women with HIV can live and stay healthy for many years. Knowing that you are HIV positive can help you make the decisions and choices to maintain your health. You may feel scared, overwhelmed and confused. Talking with a support worker or counselor may help.

Community Resources

Sexual Health Clinics and Community Health Centres

Hassle Free Clinic*	416-922-0566
Centre Medico Social Comunautaire*	416-922-2672
Immigrant Women's Health Centre	416-323-9986
Planned Parenthood Toronto*	416-961-0113
(*Anonymous testing sites)	

Legal

HIV AIDS Legal Clinic of Ontario 416-340-7790

Support Services

African Community Health Services	416-591-7600
Africans in Partnership Against AIDS	416-924-5256
AIDS Committee of Toronto	416-340-2437
Alliance for South Asian AIDS Prevention	416-599-2727
Asian Community AIDS Services	416-963-4300
Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention	416-977-9955
Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples	416-925-2800
St. Stephens Community House	416-926-8221
Voices of Positive Women	416-324-8703
Women's Health in Women Hands	416-593-7655

Funded by the City of Toronto and the ACT Community Partners Fund • Published 06/2003

Women,



Taking care of ourselves.



WHAT IS HIV?

HIV is the virus that causes AIDS.

HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus.

AIDS is the advanced stages of HIV infection.



“Does HIV really affect women?”

Worldwide, almost half of all HIV infections are among women. But, most didn't know they were infected until they became sick or their child became sick. HIV/AIDS affects women in every community but it is hard to talk openly about it because many people believe that if you have HIV you must have

done something wrong. Some of us may have sex with only one person and believe this will keep us safe.

Some of us may think that only men who have sex with other men get HIV. But it is not who you are or who your partner is that puts you at risk. It is what you do.



How do women get HIV?

These are the most common ways women and men become infected with HIV.

- Having sex without a condom - vaginal or anal
- Sharing needles to inject drugs, for tattooing or piercing
- If you are pregnant, the virus can be passed to your child during pregnancy, labour, delivery and breastfeeding
- Blood products or blood transfusions. Although all donated blood in Canada is tested for HIV, many countries may not test the blood supply.

HIV isn't an easy virus to catch. You can't get HIV from mosquito bites, kissing, sharing cups, plates or taking care of someone who is HIV positive.

“Would I know if I was HIV positive?”

The only way of knowing whether you have HIV is through an “HIV antibody” blood test.

People can live for many years without feeling sick.



“I'm nervous about taking the test. How can I prepare for the test?”

Having an HIV test is a big decision. Talk to a counselor before you get tested to help you decide whether this is the best time for you. You may want to bring a friend or support worker with you when you go for the test and when you get the results.

“I'm pregnant: Should I get an HIV test?”

If you are HIV positive and pregnant there is about a 25% chance that the baby will become infected with the virus. There are treatments which reduce the risk of your baby getting

HIV. Your doctor should tell you about the risks and benefits to you and your baby so you can decide the best options for you.



“Do I have to be tested by my doctor or in a hospital?”

No. There are three types of testing available.

- Anonymous Testing: is done by appointment at specific clinics. Each person is given a code, which is sent to the lab. Only you know the code. And only you know the results. Your doctor cannot do anonymous testing.
- Non-nominal testing: is done by your doctor. A code is sent to the lab. You and your doctor know the code. The results are recorded in your medical chart. Public Health is informed about the results.
- Nominal Testing: Is done by your doctor. Your name will be sent to the lab and the results recorded in your medical chart. Public Health is informed about the results and may contact you if the result is positive.

