

HIV Self-Testing: What You Need to Know

HIV self-testing at home offers an innovative way to bridge gaps in access to HIV testing and ensure that HIV testing is simple and more accessible for all, but most people (61%) have never been tested for HIV. The CDC recommends that everyone between the ages of 13 and 64 get tested for HIV at least once as part of routine medical care, and that some groups at increased risk of HIV transmission be tested more frequently.



People can test wherever and whenever they want

HIV self-testing empowers people to find out their HIV status wherever and whenever they want. Since it is easy, quick and private, people may be encouraged to take a test earlier than they would if they had to visit a health facility, potentially bringing an earlier diagnosis. Any HIV-positive result must, however, be followed up with a second test by a health-care provider to confirm the result and get linked to appropriate prevention, treatment and care.



No coercion

With increases in the availability of HIV self-testing comes the real risk of coercion. No one—not doctors, partners, family members, employers or anyone else—should force you to take a test. HIV testing should always be voluntary and with consent.



On treatment? Don't self-test

Effective HIV treatment reduces the level of HIV in the blood to undetectable levels. An HIV self-test, or any other HIV test, taken while someone is on treatment could come up as negative even though the person is still HIV-positive. People should never self-test while on HIV treatment.



Reducing stigma

Fear of stigma deters many people from accessing HIV testing services. HIV self-testing gives people the freedom to test anonymously, confidentially and privately.



Counseling is important

HIV testing should always be accompanied by counseling. People who self-test should always be informed of the various opportunities for counseling, whether it's by phone, online, or in any other acceptable way.



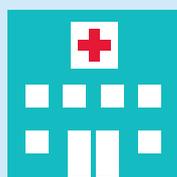
HIV self-testing reaches people who need it most

HIV self-testing has been shown to reach people who would not otherwise be reached by testing services including men, young people, and members of key populations—gay men and other men who have sex with men and transgender people



Be aware of other sexually transmitted infections

HIV self-tests give results only for HIV. People who take an HIV self-test should be made aware that they could be living with, and therefore be tested for, other sexually transmitted infections.



Relieving the burden at clinics while maintaining anonymity

By offering self-test kits at busy clinics where everyone should be tested, but resources may be lacking, only people who test positive, or people with particular concerns, need to be seen by a healthcare professional.



Reaching the hard-to-reach

People can be better reached with self-testing. For instance, women at a prenatal clinic or people from key populations who are visiting health-care facilities can collect self-testing kits and offer them to their partners.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and UNAIDS

To have an HIV home test kit mailed to you, simply send an email to info@gcapp.org with delivery address and a kit will be sent to you.

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