



GCAPP PARENT TOOLKIT:

HIV Self Testing: What You Need to Know

HIV self-testing is a powerful, innovative tool that helps make HIV testing easier, faster, and more accessible especially for people who may face barriers to traditional testing. Yet despite its importance, **61% of people have never been tested for HIV.**

According to the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**, everyone between the ages of **13 and 64** should get tested for HIV at least once as part of routine medical care. For individuals at higher risk, more frequent testing is recommended.

Test Anytime, Anywhere

HIV self-testing gives individuals the ability to test in the comfort and privacy of their own homes whenever and wherever they choose. The process is quick, simple, and discreet, encouraging earlier testing and potentially leading to earlier diagnosis and treatment.

If a self-test result is **positive**, it's crucial to **follow up with a healthcare provider** for confirmation and to get connected with appropriate care and support services.

Reducing Stigma, Increasing Access

Stigma continues to be a major barrier to HIV testing. Self-testing provides a confidential and anonymous option, empowering people who may otherwise avoid clinic-based testing due to fear or judgment.

Reaching Those Who Need It Most

HIV self-testing is particularly effective at reaching:

● Men

● Young People

● Key populations, including gay and bisexual men, transgender individuals, and others who may not regularly access healthcare services.

These groups are often underrepresented in traditional testing settings but can be better reached with flexible self-testing options.



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1. Relieving Pressure on Clinics

In busy clinics or areas with limited resources, self-testing can ease the burden on healthcare staff. Only individuals with positive results or specific concerns need to seek further in-person care, helping clinics focus their resources where they're most needed **without compromising privacy or care quality.**

2. Voluntary, Always

HIV testing should **never be forced**. No one whether a doctor, partner, employer, or family member has the right to coerce someone into testing. **Consent is essential.** Testing must always be **voluntary** and accompanied by proper support.

3. Already on HIV Treatment? Don't Self-Test

If you're on HIV treatment, **do not use self-tests.** Effective treatment can lower HIV levels in the blood to the point where the virus becomes undetectable and a self-test might wrongly show a negative result. Always consult your healthcare provider for appropriate testing while on treatment.

4. Counseling Matters

Testing is just one part of the process. **Access to counseling** whether over the phone, online, or in person is vital. Everyone who takes a self-test should be aware of and have access to counseling options for support, questions, or next steps.

5. Don't Forget Other STIs

HIV self-tests detect only HIV. If you're testing for HIV, it's also a good time to ask your provider about screening for other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Protecting your health means looking at the full picture.

6. Empowering Partners, Reaching the Unreachable

Self-testing also opens the door for partner testing. For example, a woman visiting a prenatal clinic or someone from a key population can take home a test kit and offer it to their partner helping extend testing to people who might otherwise be missed.

SOURCE:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)



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