

# Routine Testing: Client Information Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)

## What You Need To Know

- HIV testing is now **routine**.
- **Your health care provider will offer you a test.**
- Knowing your HIV status is important.
- The only way to know your results for sure is to have a test.
- You may also want to be tested for **Hepatitis B** and **Hepatitis C**.
- Early care and/or treatment for HIV helps people to live longer, healthier lives.
- Positive test results are sent to the Medical Health Officer.
- Support is offered to people with HIV.
- **You have the right to say no to HIV testing.**



## Routine HIV testing is recommended in Saskatchewan

### Why is HIV testing offered?

Approximately 1 in 4 people who have HIV don't realize it.

**Knowing you are HIV negative is just as important as you are HIV positive.** The only way to know for sure is to have a test.

Having HIV **can affect your current health care.** This includes how infections and cancers are treated.

### Routine testing for HIV helps you:

- **Access services and care** earlier.
- **Live longer, healthier** lives with early treatment.
- Become actively **involved in care.**
- **Decrease worry** about possible infection.
- **Prevent the spread of HIV** to others.
- **Avoid discrimination.**

### What do you need to know?

**Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)** is a virus that attacks the immune system. The immune system helps your body fight off infection.

HIV can lead to an Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (**AIDS**) if not treated with medication.

There is no cure for HIV, **but it can be treated.**

**People living with HIV can have healthy lives, relationships and children.**

Medication can lower the amount of virus in the body. People with lower amounts of virus are less likely to pass the infection to others.

### HIV can be spread by:

- **Sexual contact** (unprotected vaginal, anal and oral).
- **Blood contact**
- **Sharing needles, syringes and other drug use equipment.**
- **Sharing equipment used for tattooing, piercing or acupuncture.**
- **Pregnancy, delivery or breastfeeding** (A pregnant woman with HIV may pass it on to her child).

## Who Can I Talk To?

### About having a test

Talk to your regular health care provider, a doctor, nurse practitioner or nurse. Locate a local clinic by calling HealthLine at 811, or going online to: <http://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/health/understanding-the-health-care-system/saskatchewan-health-regions/health-regions-and-services-map> (Click “Filter” and choose HIV Testing, then click “Update”)

### About consent, privacy & confidentiality

Talk to your nurse, doctor, privacy officer in your health region, or the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner at 1-877-748-2298 or (306)787-8350.

### About the legal side of HIV testing & consent

Call the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network at 1-416-595-1666.

### About HIV & Hepatitis C

Call CATIE (Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange) at 1-800-263-1638 or go online: [www.catie.ca/en/home](http://www.catie.ca/en/home)



## What are the 3 C's of HIV testing?

**Confidentiality:** Routine HIV testing is usually done using your name and health number. This information is kept **strictly confidential at all times**. If you have concerns about your privacy, talk to your health care provider.

**Counselling:** A person should have **enough information to feel comfortable** with the choice they make before agreeing to an HIV test.

**Consent:** You have the right to say “no” to HIV testing.

## What do I need to know about the test?

Test results may take up to **two weeks** to return. Your results will be sent to the health care provider who tested you.

The tests may not detect early infection with HIV. If you think you may have been in **contact with HIV in the last 3 months**, talk to your healthcare provider about being re-tested.

## What if I test positive for HIV?

You will be **notified** by a healthcare professional.

Positive results are kept **confidential**. Access is strictly controlled under provincial acts and regulations.

You will be offered **information and supports** to help deal with your diagnosis, follow-up care and treatment.

Like other communicable infections (influenza, whooping cough, food poisoning), positive HIV test results are sent to your local **Medical Health Officer** in your region. This is a public health doctor who will make sure that you are offered support and help.

Your current and past sexual/drug use **partners** will be offered a test for HIV. A public health nurse can discuss with you the best way to tell your partners. If you like, the nurse can inform them **without** identifying you. The nurse can also help you find ways to tell all future partners.

## What if I test negative for HIV?

Your health care provider will talk with you about when you should have your next routine test. You may also want to talk about ways to help you stay negative.

Adapted from: **Routine HIV Testing in Hospital – Patient Information**, STOP HIV/AIDS, BC.  
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