

A health information sheet on how to get an AIDS test featuring an illustration of a man having a blood test by Beaver Masigo. Colour lithograph, ca. 1992.

Publication/Creation

[South Africa] : [publisher not identified], [1992?]

Persistent URL

<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/vsudqctk>

License and attribution

You have permission to make copies of this work under a Creative Commons, Attribution, Non-commercial license.

Non-commercial use includes private study, academic research, teaching, and other activities that are not primarily intended for, or directed towards, commercial advantage or private monetary compensation. See the Legal Code for further information.

Image source should be attributed as specified in the full catalogue record. If no source is given the image should be attributed to Wellcome Collection.

GETTING AN AIDS TEST

YOU CAN FIND OUT IF YOU ARE CARRYING THE AIDS VIRUS. THIS MONTH DR CLIVE GIVES SOME ADVICE ON WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ...

WITH the increase in Aids, many people want to know if they have been infected or not.

People can be infected with the Aids virus but look and feel healthy for up to 10 years. If you think you may have caught the Aids virus, the only way to find out is to take a blood test.

Aids is caused by the HIV virus (Human Immuno-Deficiency Virus). This virus is passed from one person to another through exchanging body fluids. You can get it from having sex with someone who has the virus. You can also get it from the blood of someone who is infected through sharing needles or razor blades.

When a virus enters your body, your body's defence system will make antibodies that will try to destroy the virus. These antibodies stay in your body for life. The HIV test shows if there are HIV antibodies in your blood. If you have HIV antibodies in your blood, you are HIV positive. That means you came into contact with the Aids virus.

IF THE HIV TEST IS NEGATIVE

A negative test means that no HIV antibodies were found in your blood. A negative HIV test may mean one of three things:

1. You have not come into contact with the HIV virus.
2. You came into contact with HIV but luckily it did not enter your body.
3. The HIV virus has entered your body but your body has not had enough time to produce enough antibodies to show up on the test. This may happen if you take the test within three months of getting the infection. In some unusual cases, it may

take up to six months for the test to become positive. So wait at least three months after you think you may have been infected before you take the test.

IF YOU ARE HIV NEGATIVE, STAY THAT WAY

1. Unless you are sure that you and your partner are HIV negative, use a condom every time you have vaginal, oral or anal sex.
2. Never share a needle or syringe with anyone. Make sure that any sharp instrument that may have blood on it and that can cut your skin, like a needle or razor blade, is completely clean and sterile.
3. If you get drunk or use drugs, you may be less careful about taking *precautions to avoid catching the Aids virus.

IF THE HIV TEST IS POSITIVE

If your test is positive, it means there are HIV antibodies in your blood. This shows that the virus is in your body.

However, being HIV positive does not mean that you have Aids and it is not certain that you will develop Aids in the future. You can lead a normal, healthy life for many years. But most people develop Aids within 10 years of being infected with the HIV virus.

Medical research has not yet got all the answers about HIV and Aids. We hope that drugs and vaccines will be found to cure Aids. There is a drug called AZT which can delay Aids in some HIV positive people. But it is expensive and its effects are not certain.

SOME TIPS IF YOU ARE HIV POSITIVE:

- Do not pass the HIV virus to your sexual partner. You can help prevent the spread of the HIV virus by always using a condom for vaginal, anal and oral sex.
- Try to eat healthy foods and reduce drinking alcohol and smoking. This makes you stronger and helps to fight diseases.
- Do not share needles, syringes or razor blades.
- Do not donate blood for blood transfusions.
- Think very carefully about becoming pregnant. Remember the HIV virus can be passed on to your baby during pregnancy or childbirth.
- Have any sore or discharge on your penis or vagina treated at a recognised health service.



The only way to find out if you have the Aids virus is by having a blood test

At first it may be difficult for you to accept that you are HIV positive and to make the necessary changes in your life. It is important to try to think positively about the problem. It is a good idea to get advice and counselling from your nearest clinic or hospital. All the information is kept secret so people will not find out that you are HIV positive unless you tell them.

Having an HIV test is a big decision to make. Because it can affect you in many ways, it is a decision only you can make. No one can force you to take the test. If you do want to take the test, you should get counselling and advice before you take the test.

- Next month we will look at your rights regarding Aids testing.

For advice on Aids or Aids testing, you can phone any of these numbers. The advice is free and is *confidential.

Johannesburg: (011) 725-6710
Cape Town: (021) 210-2682
Bloemfontein: (051) 405-8544
Durban: (031) 300-3104
East London: (0431) 342-383
Pietersburg: (01521) 914-962
Port Elizabeth: (041) 506-1415
Pretoria: (012) 313-7988

- Tune in to Radio Metro for the Talking Aids show every Tuesday from 8 - 8.30pm. You can phone in and ask any questions you may have about Aids. Tel: (011) 714-8063.

DICTIONARY

precautions — doing something to stop something dangerous happening
confidential — it is kept secret