

The HIV antibody test : yes or no / Islington Council HIV Unit.

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THE
H·I·V
ANTIBODY
TEST

YES or NO

ISLINGTON COUNCIL



HIV · UNIT

Having an HIV antibody test has advantages and disadvantages. Having counselling may give you the chance to talk to someone about what having the test means to you and help you decide whether or not to have an HIV antibody test.

What is the test?

When you get infected with a virus your body makes antibodies to try and fight off the virus. The test for HIV is to see if your body has produced these antibodies. If a person has been infected with HIV, it takes most people three to six months to develop antibodies. Some people may take longer to produce antibodies and a very small number of people may not produce any at all. If the test shows that you have produced antibodies then you have HIV. If you have no antibodies to HIV, this might be because you don't have the virus, or because your body hasn't produced antibodies yet. To be sure of a negative result you will have to get another test in three months. During these three months you would have to make sure you don't do anything that may put you at risk of HIV infection if you want an accurate result.

Having the test, regardless of the result, may mean you are discriminated against when applying for things like life insurance, mortgages, financial loans and employment. It is therefore important that you explore this during pre-test counselling.

If you decide to have the test

If you decide to have an HIV antibody test you may have to think about who, if anyone, you want to tell. It's important you are aware of what might happen if you tell people you are having an HIV test or your result. If the person you tell tells other people you may end up having no control over who knows and having to deal with people's reactions. Having counselling may give you the support to think about how you feel and decide what you want to do. It's worth making sure that the place you go for a test gives counselling before and after the test.

Getting your test result

Whether a test result is positive or not, people are advised to look after their health and practice safer sex. A negative result does not mean that you are immune to HIV. If it was what you were doing that made you decide to have an HIV antibody test, you will have to change what you do to reduce your risk in the future. Getting a positive result is likely to be a shock. A positive result means that you have HIV infection, it does not mean you have AIDS or will necessarily develop AIDS. Counselling or talking to other people who have HIV may be useful to you, some useful contacts are on this leaflet.

Counselling, before and after an HIV antibody test is available through iCARE. iCARE also offer short term counselling and referrals to other agencies. See the contact overleaf.

Useful Addresses

■ **Positively Women**

5 Sebastian Street,
London EC1V 0HD

Tel: 071-490 5501 (administration)
071-490 5515 (client)

Support, counselling and advice for
women who have HIV infection or AIDS

■ **iCARE**

10 Corsica Street
London N5 1JD

Tel: 071-477 2574

Offer counselling, advice and
information

■ **James Pringle House**

73-75 Charlotte Street
London W1

Tel: 071-636 8333 ext9141

Offer HIV testing and counselling

■ **Angel Drug Project and Exchange**

38-44 Liverpool Road
London N1

Tel: 071-226 3113 (Mon - Fri)

Offer counselling, advice and referral to
rehab and other drug agencies, clean
needles and syringes



■ **Venus Project**

c/o Montem School

Hornsey Road

London N7

Tel: 071-272 8467

Counselling, information and support
for young people (under 25's) on all
aspects of sexuality, employment/train-
ing and housing

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