

The HIV antibody test / amden & Islington Community Health Services NHS Trust.

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Camden & Islington Community Health Services NHS Trust.

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THE HIV ANTIBODY TEST

- This test is being offered routinely.
- It is **your** decision whether to test or not.
- Please read this leaflet carefully before seeing the doctor.



CAMDEN & ISLINGTON
Community Health Services NHS Trust
Your Partner for Health

THE HIV TEST

- The HIV test is a simple blood test which determines whether you have developed antibodies to HIV.
- It takes up to three months from infection for your body to produce these antibodies. Therefore it is important to wait three months since you were last at risk of exposure.
- "Risk of exposure" means the last time you had unprotected sexual intercourse or shared intravenous needles or works.
- The HIV test is not a test for AIDS. AIDS is a condition which may develop in people with HIV infection. It occurs when the person's immune system has been severely damaged, making them vulnerable to rare infections and cancers.

CONFIDENTIALITY

- Your medical records at this clinic are protected by an Act of Parliament which ensures confidentiality.
- Your HIV result will not be given to anyone without your consent. This includes insurance companies, employers and financial institutions.
- If you are concerned about confidentiality or insurance implications, please ask to speak to a health adviser.

POSSIBLE REASONS FOR TESTING

- As part of a sexual health check up.
- If you're concerned about high risk behaviour - i.e. unsafe sex, sharing needles.
- If your current or a previous partner is HIV positive.
- If you're making a commitment to a new relationship.
- If you're planning a pregnancy.
- If you're concerned about physical symptoms which you believe may be HIV or AIDS related. If this is the case, please discuss with the doctor. It is important to be aware that such symptoms are usually because of other common infections or because you are very anxious and worried.

HOW TESTING MAY AFFECT YOU

- The HIV test provides information about your health. Therefore it is **your** decision whether or not to have the test.
- You need to think about how you would cope with a positive result.
- Have you discussed testing with your partner? By testing you, we are not testing them. If you are concerned about your partner's HIV status, think about both of you having the test.
- If your test is positive and you wish to inform previous partners, the health adviser will help you with this.

WHAT WOULD A NEGATIVE RESULT MEAN?

- A negative result would mean that you haven't been infected with HIV.
- It wouldn't automatically mean that your partner is negative.
- If you have been at risk of exposure within the last three months you may wish to retest at three months from that risk.
- You would still need to consider ways to protect yourself from HIV and other STD's in the future.

WHAT WOULD A POSITIVE RESULT MEAN?

- A positive result would mean that you were infected with HIV. Most people with HIV infection remain well for many years.
- You would need to consider your medical health. Routine check ups may help the doctor predict problems and prescribe various treatments that may help to delay illness.
- It would be important to have support, both within the clinic and amongst family and friends.
- You might wish to find out about various HIV organisations and groups with access to counselling, support and complimentary therapies.
- A positive result wouldn't necessarily mean that your partner was positive.
- If you were pregnant or have children a positive result wouldn't necessarily mean that your baby or children were positive.
- Health advisers in the clinic are available to give support with all of the above issues and to answer any other questions you may have.