

## **An important test for people who have tuberculosis (TB) / TB Alert.**

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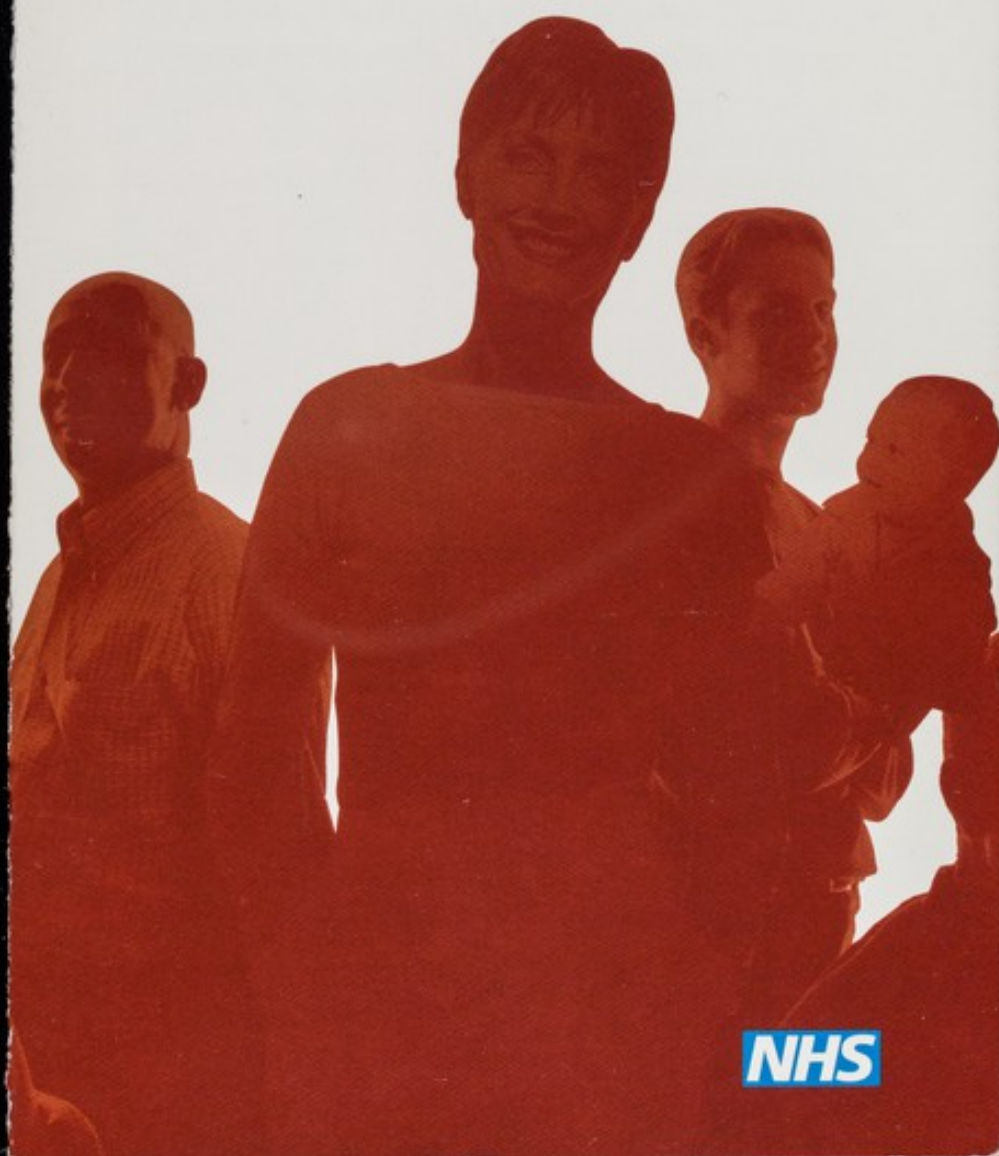


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INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS



## An Important Test for People Who Have Tuberculosis (TB)



**NHS**

## **What have HIV and AIDS got to do with TB?**

Most people who have TB in the UK are not also infected with HIV. However, HIV/AIDS and TB do go together quite often in some countries. HIV damages the body's defence systems, which allows TB to take hold more easily.

Some people pick up TB while living in other countries where both TB and HIV are very common. Therefore these two infections are closely linked – anyone who has one of them might have been exposed to the other.

## **What is HIV/AIDS?**

- ⊙ HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus. AIDS stands for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome.
- ⊙ HIV is an infection that damages the body's defences against other diseases, mainly infections.
- ⊙ When certain other diseases occur with HIV infection the person has AIDS.

## **How common is HIV?**

HIV is found throughout the world. But there are some areas – such as sub-Saharan Africa, Southern Asia and Eastern Europe – where HIV is more common.

In the UK, it is estimated that over 30,000 people are living with HIV and the numbers continue to rise with more than 3500 people testing positive for HIV for the first time every year. World-wide, the most common way HIV is passed on is by sex between men and women, however the number of new cases found among men who have sex with men remains high.

## Is there a cure for HIV and AIDS?

The effects of HIV can be controlled and even reversed by anti-HIV medicines. At the moment there is no cure for HIV or AIDS. However, research shows that most people taking anti-HIV medicines live longer and feel better. If you know you are HIV positive, you can take steps to reduce the risk of passing on the infection to others.

## How is HIV passed on?

- ⊙ By having vaginal or anal sex without a condom. Unprotected oral sex also carries some risk.
- ⊙ By a mother to her baby during pregnancy, at birth or through breastfeeding.
- ⊙ By sharing needles, syringes or other drug-injecting equipment.
- ⊙ By treatment with untested blood or blood products.

## The HIV Test

### What does the test involve?

A small sample of blood will be taken from your arm, sent to a laboratory and tested.

You may have already had blood tests done at the clinic, but we can only do an HIV test with your agreement and permission. All HIV tests are free of charge.

## How long before I can get the result?

It usually takes 3 working days to get the result back. Whatever the result, it will be given to you personally by a healthcare professional: the result cannot be given over the phone and paper copies of the result are not usually given out to patients.

## **What does the result tell me?**

### **HIV Negative**

This means that you do not have HIV unless you have been exposed to HIV in the 3 months before the test. If you have been exposed in the last 3 months the test may not be able to detect this (the 'window' period). You might be advised to have another test 3 months after you were last at risk of HIV exposure.

### **HIV Positive**

You have HIV. The result is checked with a second HIV test (a mistake is very unlikely). You will have a confidential meeting with a specialist in HIV/AIDS, who will give you information about HIV/AIDS, support you in coming to terms with the diagnosis and arrange any treatment required.

## **Who gets to know the result?**

The result is strictly confidential to you and the staff concerned with your medical care. Nobody else will be told of the result without your permission. The result is not released to your partner anyone else in your family or friends, your employer, your landlord, the Government, the Home Office or Immigration Service.

## **Where can I go to get an HIV test or discuss testing?**

You can have the test at the TB clinic but there are also other places where you can get a test or discuss any concerns you have.

## Testing at the TB clinic

You can discuss HIV testing with the TB doctor or nurse who have been specially trained. All information is treated confidentially. If you have a test at the TB clinic, the result will be recorded in your ordinary hospital notes; this means the result can be read by other doctors or nurses involved in your care at the hospital, but not by anyone else.

## Testing at your local Genito-Urinary Medicine (GUM) Clinic

(For further information contact your TB nurse)

- ⊙ At some clinics, you can walk in and wait to see a doctor; at other clinics, you may need to book an appointment.
- ⊙ You do not need a letter from another doctor.
- ⊙ These clinics have special strong confidentiality rules.
- ⊙ Your notes never leave the clinic and can only be read by staff who work there.
- ⊙ The result will not be released to your GP.
- ⊙ You do not have to give your real name, date of birth or address, but make sure you remember what personal details you gave.
- ⊙ If you want to have a test at another clinic, call the National AIDS Helpline free on 0800 567 123.
- ⊙ You can also get the test from your GP.
- ⊙ However your GP may have to pass information about a positive HIV test on to life or health insurance companies if you make a claim. If you are concerned about this, it is best to test at a GUM clinic.

Protect your family and friends from TB – take all your TB medicine

## Other sources of advice about testing

**National AIDS Helpline (NAH)**

0800 567123 (website: [www.lovelife.uk.com](http://www.lovelife.uk.com))

**National AIDS Helpline Language Line**

0800 917 2227

**Terrence Higgins Trust Helpline**

020 7242 1010

**Positively Women Helpline**

020 7713 0222

**Blackliners Helpline**

020 7738 5274

**Mainliners Helpline**

020 7582 5226

**TB Alert** is a unique charity, raising awareness of Tuberculosis in the UK and supporting the work of the NHS by providing information to patients. We support projects in developing countries ensuring that all patients receive proper treatment. With your support we can make a positive, worldwide impact on Tuberculosis and save more lives.

For further information, copies of this leaflet, or to make a donation please contact:

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Original development work by the North West London TB Network