

HTLV-III testing information / Public Health Service, Alameda County Health Service Agency.

Contributors

Alameda County Health Service Agency. Public Health Service

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AIDS Safe-Sex Guidelines

Safe sex practices:

- Massage, hugging
- Mutual masturbation
- Social kissing (dry)
- Body-to-body rubbing (frottage)
- Voyeurism, exhibitionism, fantasy

Possibly safe sex practices:

- French kissing (wet)
- Anal intercourse with condom
- Vaginal intercourse with condom
- Sucking - stop before climax
- Cunnilingus
- Watersport - external only
- (Risk increases with multiple partners.)

Unsafe sex practices:

- Rimming
- Fisting
- Blood contact
- Sharing sex toys or IV drug equipment.
- Semen or urine in the mouth
- Anal intercourse without condom
- Vaginal intercourse without condom

Symptoms Of AIDS or AIDS-Related Complex

People concerned about AIDS should be aware of signs and symptoms. It is important to remember that these symptoms last for many weeks, and that other diseases can have similar symptoms. The common diseases - cold, flu, hepatitis - are still more common.

AIDS symptoms:

- Swollen lymph nodes in armpits, neck, groin.

- Thrush - white patches in the mouth.
- Unexplained weight loss of 10 lbs. or more.
- Prolonged, non-productive cough.
- Persistent diarrhea.
- Unusual spots or lesions on the skin.

HTLV-III Testing Information

Fairmont Ambulatory Care Center Clinic
18400 Foothill Blvd.
San Leandro, CA. 94578

Public Health Service

Alameda County Health Care
Service Agency

HTLV-III Test — What Does It Mean?

AIDS, Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, is a viral infection that destroys the body's immune system and leaves it vulnerable to other diseases. The virus HTLV-III is currently thought to be the cause of AIDS.

How Is HTLV-III Transmitted?

It is spread by exchange of body fluids, principally through sexual contact, blood and blood products. This includes transmission through sharing needles or equipment used for injecting drugs.

What Does The Test Result Mean?

Created primarily to be used in blood donor facilities to protect the nation's blood supply, the test will be used to identify antibodies to HTLV-III in the blood or blood products. (An antibody is the immune system's response to invasion by the virus).

The HTLV-III Antibody Test Does Not Diagnose AIDS. It simply measures the development of antibodies to the HTLV-III virus. A positive test result showing the presence of antibodies means exposure to the HTLV-III virus at some point in the past. It is not known whether individuals with positive test results will go on to develop AIDS, whether they are infectious, or whether they are possibly immune.

Similarly, a negative test result does not necessarily mean an individual has not been exposed to the virus. It could mean there has been no prior exposure or infection by the virus, that the individual is still in an incubation period before development of the antibody, or that there may have been a prior infection and the antibody is no longer detectable.

The Antibody Test

Since a diagnosis of AIDS or of infection with HTLV-III may create considerable anxiety, it is important that you understand the implications of the antibody test before being tested. You may want to decline the test after receiving this information.

Clients who are taking this test should know that:

- You are being tested for antibodies to HTLV-III virus, which is the possible cause of AIDS.
- The HTLV-III antibody test is not a diagnostic test for AIDS. It simply measures the immune system's response as a result of being exposed to the virus. The test does not determine if the virus is still present and it does not predict if a person will become ill from the virus infection.
- As with any test, false positives and false negatives occur. Further evaluation is necessary.
- While no written record of testing, other than the one you receive, will be part of this process, you should be aware that there are concerns that if a positive antibody test does become part of your medical record it could be used as grounds for denial of life or health insurance in the future. A positive antibody test could also become a reason for denying employment. The health department in no way supports such action.
- While a positive test result does not necessarily mean one is going to develop AIDS, because of many misconceptions and perceived implications surrounding this test, one should be aware that the mental health impact of receiving results of this test may not be insignificant and one should be

prepared for such a reaction. This should be considered prior to taking the test. Support and referral to appropriate resources will, of course, be made available.

Confidentiality

No names of clients will be used at the test sites. Results will be given only in person and only to the client. The client must present his or her copy of the lab slip with his or her confidential number at the time of receiving test results.

Risk Groups

People seeking this test should understand that certain groups are at increased risk of exposure to the HTLV-III virus. They are:

- Gay and bisexual men.
- Both men and women who use or have used IV drugs and share IV equipment.
- Men and women who have received a blood transfusion or any blood products during the past 5-7 years.
- Sex partners of any of the above groups.

Risk Reduction Guidelines

For people in the risk group, information about reducing risk or exposure to the virus is important, no matter what the outcome of the test may be.

- Safe sex guidelines should be followed. These include using condoms and avoiding sex where there is an exchange of any bodily fluids.
- Limit number of sex partners. Know your partner well.
- Don't share IV drug equipment.