

**AIDS and the HIV test : peace of mind / HarleyScreen Medical Centre.**

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HarleyScreen Medical

**Publication/Creation**

1991.

**Persistent URL**

<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/mxgad4n9>

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# AIDS AND THE HIV TEST

*Peace of Mind*

## HARLEYS SCREEN MEDICAL CENTRE

- HIV TESTING
- 3 HOUR SERVICE
- ANONYMOUS & CONFIDENTIAL
- NO APPOINTMENT NECESSARY

## WHAT IS AIDS?

AIDS stands for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. This means that the immune system which naturally protects the body against disease has been damaged and so cannot defend you against certain illnesses.

The agent that causes AIDS is a virus called HIV, the Human Immunodeficiency Virus.

## THE HIV TEST

- When your body is infected with HIV, your bloodstream reacts by producing antibodies.
- The HIV test is a blood test to see whether these antibodies are present in your blood.
- The test is done on a small sample of your blood, usually taken from your arm.
- The test method used in laboratories is very reliable and a positive test is double checked.
- The result can take up to 2 weeks if the test is done at a National Health Centre, or within 24 hours if analysed privately.

## WHAT THE RESULT TELLS YOU

### If the Result is Negative

It means no HIV antibodies have been detected in your blood which can mean one of two things:

- You HAVE NOT been exposed to the HIV Virus.
- You HAVE been exposed to the HIV Virus but the antibodies have not developed yet. It can take up to 3 months and sometimes longer to produce antibodies after you have been infected with the virus.

If you have practised unsafe sex, or shared needles with anyone during the 3 months before taking the test, it is advisable to have the HIV test repeated.

### **If the Result is Positive**

It means that HIV antibodies have been detected in your blood and that you have the virus.

It does not mean that you have AIDS or that you will develop AIDS. Whilst some people who are HIV positive do develop AIDS or AIDS-related illnesses, others stay well.

## **SHOULD I TAKE THE TEST?**

Having the test is a personal decision and some people may wish to have counselling before making up their minds. At HarleyScreen we offer you an opportunity to discuss your concerns about having the test done with a trained counsellor. Following counselling, you are under NO obligation to have a test.

### **The Disadvantages**

No major life assurance company will give a new policy to someone who knowingly carries the HIV virus.

If it is known that you may have the virus your housing and employment may be put at risk.

Some people with the virus have been rejected by their friends and family.

Knowing the result may cause anxiety, depression and distress.

### **The Advantages**

Knowing you do not have the virus can help put your mind at rest about AIDS.

It can help you make decisions about starting a family.

It can motivate you into practicing safe sex.

If your results are positive and you have developed symptoms of AIDS-related illness, you can start treatment early which in some cases can mean remission, (thereby improving the quality of life while investigations into treatments go on).

## **SOME PRACTICAL ADVICE**

Do not be pressurised into having a test done.

Feel free to discuss your feelings and concerns with the HarleyScreen counsellor or with one of the support groups listed below.

Do not tell people you are having the test done unless you are prepared to tell them your result. (Try to decide beforehand whom you can trust).

Do not tell your employer or your landlord irrespective of your result.

Practice safer sex to protect yourself and to protect your partner.

## **WHERE CAN I GO FOR HELP?**

You might need someone to speak to about the issues surrounding AIDS, such as:

- Having the test done.
- How to practice safe sex.
- How to cope constructively with the test result.
- How to deal with family and friends.

The following organisations offer support, information and help in the form of Helplines and Support Groups.

**National AIDS Helpline**  
**0800 567123 (24 hours).**

**Haemophilia Society**  
**071-928 2020 (9am to 5pm).**

**Body Positive Helpline**  
**071-373 9124 (7pm to 10pm)**

**London Lighthouse Information Service**  
**071-792 1200 (1.00pm to 7.00pm)**

**Terrence Higgins Helpline**  
**071-242 1010 (3.00pm to 10.00pm)**

## WHERE CAN I HAVE THE TEST DONE?

### At a National Health Centre

A clinic for Sexually Transmitted Diseases, or a Department of Genito-urinary medicine is the place to have the test done as they are accustomed to the concept of confidentiality.

**There is free counselling available, and the test is free.** The result can take up to 2 weeks.

### At a Private Clinic

HIV-testing, including counselling is offered by several private clinics in London, the cost ranges from £50 to £95. At HarleyScreen. The full HIV testing service (pre and post test counselling and HIV test) costs £55.00\*

## WILL MY RESULT BE CONFIDENTIAL?

**At HarleyScreen your test result is absolutely confidential.**

- You must come in person for your result. It will NOT be given over the telephone or sent by mail to ensure confidentiality.
- We guarantee not to disclose any information about you to anyone without your consent.
- You are NOT required to present any identification or give your real name**

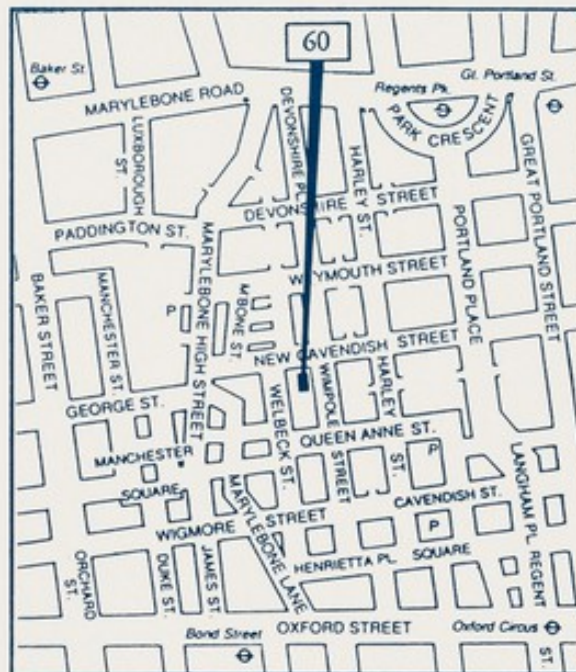
## HARLEYSCREEN MEDICAL CENTRE

- No appointment is necessary.** We are open from 9.00am to 6.00pm Monday to Friday.
- The environment is relaxed and friendly.
- Before you have the test a trained counsellor will discuss the HIV virus and the HIV test, safe sex, your specific risk and potential consequences of a positive or negative test result.
- After the discussion you may decide not to have the test done. You are under NO obligation to have a test and you will not be charged for the counselling session.

- If you decide to have the test, a blood sample is taken and analysed by qualified medical technicians at our laboratory on the premises.
- The test result is ready within 3 hours.**
- The test result is discussed with you and you are offered the opportunity of further counselling.

## CENTRAL LONDON LOCATION

HarleyScreen Medical Centre is at 60 Wimpole Street. Oxford Circus, Bond Street and Baker Street subway stations are only a few minutes walk.



For further assistance and information.

**Call 071-487 4644. Ask for HarleyScreen AA.**

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\*Correct at August 1991. Subject to change without prior notice.