



Royal Berkshire
NHS Foundation Trust

Why test for HIV?

Information for patients

Why and when you should test for HIV.

Why test for HIV?

Having an HIV test can save your life and add years to it.

Everyone should know their HIV status. Testing puts you in control and, thanks to treatment, could stop you from getting seriously ill and even save your life.

The sooner you take HIV treatment the sooner it can protect your immune system from damage. If you don't know you have HIV it could get out of control and cause long-term damage.

The sooner HIV is diagnosed the fewer health problems it will cause you. With the free medical care and treatment that is available in the UK, most people with HIV can live a long and healthy life.

Also, if you know you have HIV you can take steps to protect others. If you have HIV but don't know, you could pass it on without realising.

When to test for HIV

An HIV test is a standard part of a sexual health screen so most people have the test when they are tested for other things, such as chlamydia and gonorrhoea.

In particular you should test:

- After unprotected sex that could have put you at risk of HIV.
- At the start of a relationship, especially if you plan on not using condoms.
- At least once a year, if you have more than one sexual partner.

Some facts about HIV

- Testing for HIV is confidential – the result will not automatically be shared with your GP, family, immigration or anyone else.
- If you're not a British citizen but are applying to stay in the UK, your HIV test result will not count against you, whatever the result.

- A negative test result in the past is no longer accurate if you've taken risks since.
- *Will having an HIV test affect my insurance?* The Association of British Insurers (ABI) states that the results of a negative HIV test should not be asked about and, if asked, you do not need to answer. If you were to have a positive HIV test then you should disclose this in the same way that you would disclose any other medical condition.
- *My doctor has already tested me for 'everything' so wouldn't they know if I had HIV?* When your blood is sent to the lab the doctor needs to ask the lab to test for certain specific things. The laboratory will only check for HIV if they are asked to. HIV does not show up in routine tests such as a full blood count or kidney and liver function tests.

How to test for HIV

Blood will be taken either from your arm or, if you're having a rapid HIV test, from a finger prick blood sample. The blood sample from your arm is then sent to a lab.

A finger prick rapid test will give you a result within minutes.

A blood sample from your arm is sent to a lab with the results ready 2-3 weeks later.

Testing at home

Testing at home is now an option. Either request online for a kit to be sent in the post: www.safesexberkshire.nhs.uk/sexual-health-matters/order-hiv-test-kit/ or pick up a kit from our clinic:

Florey@Home.

Further information:

www.aidsmap.com

www.tht.org.uk

If you have any questions or need further information, please ask to speak to, or telephone a Health Adviser on 0118 322 7202

Contraception (25s and under) & Sexual Health (all ages) Drop-in Clinics – no appointment needed

Department of Sexual Health
Florey and Contraceptive Services
21A Craven Road
Reading RG1 5LE
Tel: 0118 322 7202

www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/sexualhealth

www.safesex.berkshire.nhs.uk

Except for public holidays, the clinic is open:

Monday to Friday 7am – 7pm.

Saturday 9.30 am – 11.30am.

The clinic is closed on Wednesday between 11am – 1pm for staff training.

Newbury Sexual Health
Clinic
West Berkshire
Community Hospital
Benham Hill
Thatcham RG18 3AS
9.30am – 11.30am on
Saturdays (excluding
those with a public
holiday).



We will endeavour to see everyone. However, if between 6pm and 7pm attendance is high, we may ask you to return the next day.

This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

Dept. of Sexual Health, April 2019
Review due: April 2021