

HIV antibody test

When you attend the department today your blood will be tested for HIV (the virus that causes AIDS). This is a routine test – we test everyone for HIV unless you ask us not to. You can decide not to have this test today. To do this it is important to inform the doctor, nurse or health adviser about your decision.

Why have an HIV test?

Having an HIV test is the way that you can find out whether you have HIV. If you have HIV, knowing about it means that the infection can be managed to keep you healthy and well. There are treatments available to help with this. It also means that you can prevent passing HIV on to another person.

How is HIV passed on?

HIV can be transmitted in a number of ways:

- During unprotected sex, through contact with infected bodily fluids such as blood, semen and vaginal secretions.
- Sharing needles and syringes if injecting drugs. Tattoos and piercings if the equipment has not been sterilised properly.
- Through blood transfusions in countries where blood is not screened for HIV (blood donations in the UK are screened for HIV).
- Women who have HIV can pass it on to their babies.

Will the test always show HIV?

The HIV test measures antibodies to HIV. These are proteins produced in your blood in response to HIV

infection. It can take up to 3 months after a risk for HIV, for these antibodies to show in your blood. When antibodies are detected, a second sample is required to confirm the result.

If the result is negative

This means you do not have HIV, as long as you have not put yourself at risk within the three months before the test.

What happens if my test is positive?

You will be offered care and support within the department. You will need to have some other tests and we will discuss with you whether or not you should start treatment.

If the result is `equivocal` (uncertain)

Sometimes the laboratory will inform us that the results do not clearly say whether a test is positive or negative. In this case we do some further tests to clarify the result. We will discuss this with you fully if it happens.

Confidentiality

Your clinic notes are protected by the Venereal Diseases Act. Information is not given to anyone outside the clinic without your consent.

If you need an interpreter or need a document in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221473** or email **PALSJR@ouh.nhs.uk**

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