

**WORLD  
AIDS DAY**

1 DECEMBER 2018

**COMMEMORATING  
30 YEARS**

# WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT HIV TESTING

**LIVE LIFE  
POSITIVELY**  
Know your **HIV** status



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# THERE HAVE BEEN 30 YEARS OF ACTION SINCE THE FIRST WORLD AIDS DAY WAS OBSERVED ON 1 DECEMBER 1988.

Strong global commitment to end AIDS has driven huge progress. In 2017, around 75% of people living with HIV globally knew their HIV status and 59% of all people living with HIV were accessing treatment.

However, new HIV infections are not declining fast enough and too many people are still dying from AIDS-related illnesses despite the availability of high-quality and effective treatment. And with 36.9 million men, women and children living with HIV around the world, there are more people than ever before living with HIV. A quarter don't even know that they have the virus.

People living with HIV should not die from AIDS and people who are HIV-negative should be supported with the HIV prevention knowledge and tools they need to stay negative.

## **World AIDS Day 2018**

On World AIDS Day 2018, UNAIDS is focusing on HIV testing. Testing for HIV allows you to act, to seek HIV treatment if you are HIV-positive or to protect yourself if you are HIV-negative. Knowing your HIV status gives you the power to take control over your health and well-being.

In 2017:

36.9 MILLION PEOPLE GLOBALLY  
WERE LIVING WITH HIV.

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A QUARTER OF ALL PEOPLE LIVING  
WITH HIV (9.4 MILLION) DID NOT  
KNOW THEY HAVE THE VIRUS.

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21.7 MILLION PEOPLE WERE  
ACCESSING TREATMENT (59%  
OF PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV).

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1.8 MILLION PEOPLE WERE NEWLY  
INFECTED WITH HIV.

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940 000 PEOPLE DIED FROM  
AIDS-RELATED ILLNESSES.

## Why test?

Testing is the only way to know for sure if you have HIV. If you think you may have been at risk of acquiring HIV, it is important to find out your HIV status and start treatment as soon as possible if the test result is positive. The sooner you start treatment, the healthier you will remain and the less likely you are to transmit the virus.

If you are pregnant, or thinking of having a child, it is important to get tested for HIV so that you know whether you need to take antiretroviral medicines to prevent transmission of the virus to your child, and importantly, to keep yourself healthy over the long term by adhering to sustained antiretroviral therapy.

People with a negative HIV test result should be linked to HIV prevention services and continue to protect themselves against HIV.



**“My mum was there for me, my closest buddies were also there. It’s been a long journey, when it comes to HIV. We have learnt a lot together.”  
Yeshua, Ghana.**

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"AN HIV TEST IS ...  
TO SEE THE STATE  
OF YOUR HEALTH  
AND YOUR LIFE."

Léonie | Cameroon

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## How do I know if I am at risk?

People's risk of HIV can vary from country to country and from community to community. In some countries in sub-Saharan Africa, for example, the percentage of adults aged 15–49 years living with HIV is above 20%.

In areas of high HIV prevalence, it is important for people to know their status, especially newborns, children, young people, particularly young women and girls, pregnant women and men of all ages.

There are also some key populations, including gay men and other men who have sex with men, transgender people, sex workers, people who inject drugs, people in prisons and other closed settings and migrants, who are also more at risk of HIV and should seek an HIV test.

## The Test test

If you are unsure whether you should take an HIV test, take our Test test.

Please answer the following questions:

- Do you live in an area with a high rate of HIV?
- Have you or your family ever lived in an area with a high rate of HIV?
- Have you ever paid or been paid or exchanged goods or services for sex?
- Have you ever been diagnosed with, or sought treatment for, another sexually transmitted infection?
- Have you ever had tuberculosis?
- Are you a man who has had sex without a condom with another man?
- Are you a transgender person who has had sex without a condom.
- Have you injected drugs and shared injecting equipment with others?
- Have you had sex without a condom with someone who could answer yes to any of the above questions?
- Have you ever had sex without a condom with a person who is living with HIV whose viral load you do not know to be undetectable?
- Are you pregnant or do you plan to become pregnant?

**If you answer yes to any of the above**, it would be advisable to take an HIV test. Knowing your HIV status will give you the knowledge to go on to make informed choices about your health and get access to essential treatment if needed.

**If you answer yes to more than one question**, it is strongly recommended that you take an HIV test. If you feel you may be at ongoing risk of HIV, it is recommended that you seek HIV prevention services and take an HIV test every six months.

**If you answer no to all of the above**, your HIV risk should be low; however, if you are concerned, taking an HIV test is quick and easy and will confirm your HIV status and give you the knowledge you need to stay healthy.

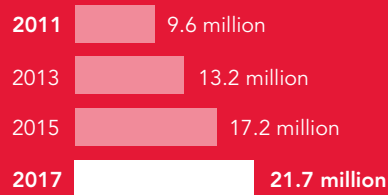


# THE BENEFITS OF KNOWING YOUR HIV STATUS

## Testing saves lives

People can only start HIV treatment if they know that they are living with the virus—about 9.4 million people do not know that they are living with HIV.

### People living with HIV on treatment



## Knowing earlier, starting earlier

The earlier that someone is diagnosed as living with HIV, the earlier life-saving treatment can start. And the earlier that HIV treatment is started after infection, the better the outcome. People can live long and healthy lives with early detection of HIV and proper treatment and care.



## Staying HIV-free

An HIV test result opens the door to accessing the range of HIV prevention options available depending on a person's HIV status to keep themselves and their loved ones HIV-negative.



## Looking after loved ones

Testing is the gateway to treatment and effective treatment is a great HIV prevention tool—it saves lives and prevents HIV transmission. HIV treatment reduces the viral load—the amount of HIV in a person's body—to undetectable levels. With an undetectable level of HIV, a person can't pass on the virus to someone else.



## Stopping transmission to babies

A pregnant or breastfeeding woman living with HIV can access a range of options that can ensure that she remains healthy and her baby is born HIV-free and stays HIV-free, but only if she knows her HIV status.



## Claiming the right to health

By deciding to know their HIV status, people are empowered to make choices about their right to health.



## Staying alive and well

Taking an HIV test can also provide an opportunity to screen and test for other illnesses, such as tuberculosis, hepatitis, high blood pressure and diabetes. Saving money and saving lives.



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"I BELIEVE THAT PEOPLE'S ATTITUDES HAVE CHANGED A LOT. STIGMA RELATED TO HIV STATUS HAS DIMINISHED. IT IS BETTER TO KNOW YOUR STATUS."

Charles and Francine | Cameroon

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## How do I get an HIV test?

Getting an HIV test is easy and free of charge in most health facilities. There are many places you can test for HIV: at your local doctors, health clinics, family planning and antenatal clinics, hospitals and mobile testing vans, or, if it is available in your area, you can test at home with a self-test kit.

An HIV test is carried out by taking blood from a finger or arm, or by using an oral swab. Depending on the type of test you do, the results can come back in 20 minutes, but if a sample needs to be sent away to a laboratory, it may take a few weeks.

Wherever you take an HIV test you should get information about HIV before and after you test and have an opportunity to ask questions. HIV testing is also an opportunity to test for other diseases, including viral hepatitis, tuberculosis and sexually transmitted infections.

## Is HIV testing confidential?

HIV testing should always be voluntary and confidential. All HIV testing services should be provided in line with the essential five Cs: consent, confidentiality, counselling, correct test results and connection/linkage to prevention, care and treatment.

## What should I do if I am HIV-positive?

Testing positive for HIV can be an overwhelming experience; however, it is important to remember that huge advances have been made and that effective treatment is now available to keep HIV-related illnesses at bay.

If you have tested positive with a self-testing kit, you will need to go to a clinic or hospital to confirm the result with a further blood test. You can contact your nearest health-care facility, which will be able to advise you.

It is important if you are HIV-positive to start HIV treatment as soon as possible, even if you are feeling well. The earlier that HIV treatment is started, the better the outcome. People can live long and healthy lives with early detection of HIV and proper treatment and care.

Once you are on antiretroviral treatment for HIV you should not re-test for HIV but regularly monitor your viral load. A low or undetectable viral load means that treatment is effective and the virus is suppressed.

If you are HIV-negative it is important to continue to protect yourself against HIV and if you feel you may be at increased risk it is advisable to test for HIV every six months.

## Remove the stigma, improve access

Eliminating HIV stigma—the irrational or fear-driven negative attitudes, behaviours and judgments towards people living with HIV—is critically important. HIV-related stigma prevents people from seeking HIV services, including HIV prevention, testing and treatment.

Eliminating HIV-related stigma and discrimination from health-care settings, towards key populations and towards people living with and affected by HIV will break down barriers and increase access to HIV services.

Many men avoid HIV testing and being linked to care, as health services are often not adapted to their needs, making visiting a clinic or hospital uncomfortable for them. Making health services more friendly to men, including, for example, having more male health-care providers, will encourage them to seek information and advice about their health, including HIV testing.

## How can I get involved?

**HIV testing is a positive step** and this World AIDS Day we are encouraging you to:

- Get informed about HIV.
- Reduce the stigma by talking about HIV.
- Consider your own HIV risk and take the Test test.
- Take an HIV test if you think you may have been at risk.
- Share the World AIDS Day materials on your social media platforms.
- Attend your local World AIDS Day event.

For more information go to: [knowyourstatus.unaids.org](https://www.knowyourstatus.unaids.org)



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“DON'T WORRY ... JUST GO AND  
GET TESTED.”

Artyom | Belarus

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# HIV TESTING: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

## The testing gap

In 2017, a quarter of all people living with HIV in the world didn't know their HIV status. If people don't know their status, they can't start treatment or think about which prevention options are best for them.

## Only you can decide to take an HIV test

Any decision to take an HIV test is yours alone. No one—not doctors, partners, family members, employers or anyone else—should force you to take a test.

## No one else need know about your test or your result

Health-care workers are duty-bound to keep all your medical information confidential. Taking an HIV test, the test result and any discussion about the result are confidential. Only the person being tested can decide whether to share the result with anyone else.

## Let's talk about the test and the result

Before someone takes a test in a clinic, they will have the opportunity to talk to a counsellor in order to understand the test, the result and the implications and to discuss any worries they may have. After the test, they will get tailored advice dependent on the result and be helped to understand the options available to them.

## Testing is simple

An HIV test is quick and painless. A small pinprick of blood from a finger or arm or some saliva is all that is needed. Someone taking a test will usually know their result within 20 minutes, although it will be longer if the sample has to be sent to a laboratory.

## Test again

Anyone who is at risk of acquiring HIV should keep up to date about their status and take a regular HIV test, at least every six months for people at higher risk.

## You can test at home

HIV self-testing kits are available in many countries, and are becoming available in many more, so people can find out their status at any time, in the privacy of their home. A repeat test in a clinic to confirm a positive result and get linked to appropriate prevention, treatment and care is essential.

## Knowing your status always helps

Whether positive or negative, an HIV test can always help. People who find out their status will either be linked to treatment that can save their lives or to prevention options to keep them or their loved ones free from HIV.

## Making sure

A negative result means just that—the person is not HIV-positive and is not living with HIV. They can be reassured, but need to bear in mind the window period—a period of time after a person is infected with HIV but during which they won't test positive—and if they continue to be exposed to HIV should consider repeating an HIV test every 6–12 months.

A single positive HIV test result will always be followed up with a second test to confirm the result. Occasionally, the second test may not agree with the first test, in which case a repeat test is recommended after six weeks. However, if the two tests, using two different samples, are positive, then an HIV-positive diagnosis is confirmed and treatment should be started as soon as possible.







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