

# ALL ABOUT HIV TESTING

**1.2 million** people in the United States have HIV, including about **158,500** people who are unaware of their status. **40%** of new HIV infections are transmitted by people who don't know they have the virus. For people with undiagnosed HIV, testing is the first step in maintaining a healthy life and preventing HIV transmission.

## Who should get tested?

The CDC recommends that everyone between the **ages of 13 and 64** get tested at least once as part of routine health care. The CDC recommends getting tested at least once a year if you've:

- had anal or vaginal sex with someone who has HIV
- had more than one sex partner since your last HIV test
- shared needles, syringes, or other injection equipment
- been diagnosed with or treated for another STD
- had sex with someone who has done anything listed above or with someone whose sexual history you don't know



## Types of Testing

HIV tests are very accurate, but **no test can detect the virus immediately after infection**. How soon a test can detect HIV depends on the type of test being used:



- **Antibody tests:**
  - look for HIV antibodies in a person's blood or oral fluid
  - can take 23 to 90 days to detect HIV after exposure
  - available as rapid tests
- **Antigen/antibody tests**
  - look for both HIV antibodies and antigens
  - performed by a lab on blood from a vein
  - can usually detect HIV 18 to 45 days after exposure
- **Nucleic Acid Tests (NATs)**
  - look for the actual virus in the blood
  - for people who have had a recent exposure or a possible exposure with early symptoms of HIV and have tested negative with an antibody or antigen/antibody test
  - can usually detect HIV 10 to 33 days after exposure

\*Antibodies are produced by a person's immune system when they're exposed to viruses like HIV.

\*Antigens are foreign substances that cause a person's immune system to activate.

<https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/testing/index.html>