

Talking About Rapid Testing: Discussing HIV Rapid Testing with Clients

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How to use this worksheet:

The worksheet addresses the discussion to be conducted 1) before the test, 2) while the test is processing, and 3) when giving test results.

The italicized text provides examples for wording. Use the blank lines that follow to write down ways to share the same information more simply.

Pretest Discussion

1. Explain that HIV testing is being offered to everyone.

One of the things we offer everyone who comes here is HIV testing. We can also discuss how you can stay safe after you get your results.

2. Explain benefits of testing

It is important for every person to understand his/her HIV status. If a person doesn't have HIV, they can learn ways to stay uninfected. If they have HIV, they can get good medical care and learn how to keep themselves healthy and their partner(s) safe.

3. Assess testing readiness

Some anxiety about HIV testing is typical. The purpose of this step is to look for significant emotional/mental health issues that would suggest delaying or slowing down the testing visit. Reassure the client that you will provide support during and after testing and, if necessary, help identify available social supports. You can explore the patient's reasons for anxiety and, if necessary, defer/refer out for more extensive counseling and testing.

Do you feel ready to receive HIV test results today?

How do you think you would react if your results came back negative?

How do you think you would react if you found out that you have, or probably have, HIV?

4. Explain meaning of negative and preliminary positive results and window period.

"A negative result means that there is no current evidence that you are infected with HIV, but it may not show a recent infection. An infection that happened in the last 3 months, and very rarely up to 6 months, may not show up on this test. What questions do you have?"

A reactive result usually means that a person has HIV. Rarely other things can cause this test to come back reactive when,

in fact, they don't have HIV. If this test comes back reactive, also called preliminary positive, we do a different test for confirmation. If that test comes back HIV-positive, it means a person has HIV. The results on the confirmatory test, if we have to do it, won't be available today. What questions do you have?

6. Obtain consent according to the protocol in your clinic/agency.

During The Test

1. Describe HIV rapid test

We are using a rapid test today. This test uses a small amount of blood from a quick fingerstick. You will receive your results before the end of your visit today. If you test negative, your results are final today. However, as we discussed earlier, if your results on this test are preliminary positive, you will need to take a second test before we are sure.

2. Conduct Test

Posttest Discussion

NEGATIVE RESULTS

1. Assess readiness to receive results

Are you ready to discuss your test results with me?

2. Give results and allow time to process

Your HIV test came back negative, which means there was no sign of infection at this time.

*How do you feel about these results?
How do you think this information will affect your activities?*

3. Explore need to retest

If you have had unprotected sex or shared needles with anyone in the past three months, we recommend that you stay safe and repeat this test in three months because it can take some time for your body to make antibodies to the HIV virus. (This three month time is called the window period.) Even though this test is negative, you can get HIV in the future if you do not protect yourself during sex by using condoms and discussing HIV risks with your partner(s). It is a good idea to get an HIV test at least once a year if you have sex or do drugs using needles. You should also get tested for HIV if you ever have an STD. You took an important step by taking an HIV test.

Possible messages/questions:

HIV testing by itself is not prevention. Let's develop a plan to reduce your risk in the future.

What are your goals regarding staying HIV negative?

What do you plan to do?

Will you discuss this with your spouse or sex partner(s)?

What prevention strategies are appropriate for you?

You should know that many people change their behavior and start having safer sex after an HIV test.

PRELIMINARY POSITIVE RESULTS

It can be difficult to give a preliminary positive result. Preparation is key, especially for health facilities using rapid testing. **Create and review your center's plan for giving preliminary positive results, and establish an on-site or outside referral system for care and support.** Notify a colleague that you will be delivering a positive result and that you may need their help. If needed, consult with the center to which you will be referring your

patient, as they may be available to help you with delivering the positive result and lowering barriers toward a smooth transition into clinical screening. State law requires reporting and partner notification of HIV-positive individuals, based on the results of confirmatory testing, not the preliminary positive result.

1. Assess readiness to receive results

Are you ready to discuss your test results with me?

2. Give results and allow time to process

(Name), your rapid test result today is preliminary positive. This usually means that a person is infected with HIV. To know for sure and because HIV infection is serious, we will do a second test.

Allow time for the news to be absorbed and focus on providing emotional support in the context of correct information about confirmatory testing. The patient may not be able to concentrate on what you have to say, nor be receptive to the support and advice that you can offer. All rapid test results must be confirmed by a Western blot test. Coordinate follow-up confirmatory testing before s/he leaves and ensure they understand the need to return for their results. A blood or oral sample should be taken in this visit and labeled as "confirmation of a rapid test."

The results of the second test will be ready in ___ days, and you will have to return here for the results. If your result is still positive, it means that you have HIV. When a person is HIV-positive, they need more tests and a check-up to learn more about their health and to see if they need to start any medicines.

Today we will take some time to talk about your reactions and how you can get support while you wait for the results. Please call here if you have questions or concerns while you are waiting for results.

Possible messages:

Since this first test shows that you probably have HIV, it is very important that you take steps now to prevent passing the infection to your sex (or needle-sharing) partners, and to protect yourself from other STDs. We've talked about how HIV is spread through unprotected vaginal or anal sex or by sharing needles. You can reduce the risk of transmitting HIV and prevent yourself from getting other infections—abstaining from sex or using condoms if you are having sex and not sharing needles and works.

Do you know that the majority of people with HIV reduce their risk behavior when they find out they are infected?

What are your thoughts about being able to practice prevention with your partner(s) and telling them about your results? How do you think they will/would react?

Find an appropriate time to discuss partner notification and domestic violence issues, which will be relevant in the event of a positive confirmatory test. (Discuss as appropriate for your site/state policies. Some agencies may

find it better to discuss these topics at another time in the testing process.)

If a person tests positive on the confirmatory test, their name is provided to the state health department. They keep a very confidential list, which is used to count the number of people infected. This is required by law.

When a person tests positive, we also talk about the importance of notifying sex partners, either on their own, or with the help of the health department.

INVALID TEST

One outcome of the rapid testing process is an invalid result. An invalid test provides NO information in regard to HIV status; rather it indicates some problem with the testing process or equipment and the test will need to be re-run.

1. Explain and allow time to process.
We didn't get a good specimen or there was some problem with the test itself, so we didn't get a result. It doesn't say anything at all about your status. The test has built-in measures to make sure it's working. I am going to use another swab to take a second sample. I know this can be frustrating. We'll provide you your results from this test today. I am really sorry for this delay; I apologize for the inconvenience.

2. Repeat the test.