

## HIV Testing: Types of Tests Available

### Rapid Tests:

A rapid test is a screening test that produces very quick results, in approximately 20 minutes. Rapid tests use blood from a vein or from a finger stick, or oral fluid to look for the presence of antibodies to HIV. As is true for all screening tests, a reactive rapid HIV test result must be confirmed with a follow-up confirmatory test before a final diagnosis of infection can be made. These tests have similar accuracy rates as traditional EIA screening tests. Please visit the [rapid HIV testing](#) section for details.

### Home Testing Kits:

Consumer-controlled test kits (popularly known as "home testing kits") were first licensed in 1997. Although home HIV tests are sometimes advertised through the Internet, currently only the [Home Access HIV-1 Test System](#) is approved by the Food and Drug Administration. (The accuracy of other home test kits cannot be verified). The Home Access HIV-1 Test System can be found at most local drug stores. It is not a true home test, but a home collection kit. The testing procedure involves pricking a finger with a special device, placing drops of blood on a specially treated card, and then mailing the card in to be tested at a licensed laboratory. Customers are given an identification number to use when phoning in for the results. Callers may speak to a counselor before taking the test, while waiting for the test result, and when the results are given. All individuals receiving a positive test result are provided referrals for a follow-up confirmatory test, as well as information and resources on treatment and support services.

### RNA Tests

RNA tests look for genetic material of the virus and can be used in screening the blood supply and for detection of very early infection rare cases when antibody tests are unable to detect antibodies to HIV.

For a list of HIV tests that are FDA-approved, visit the [Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\) Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research](#).

★ [If I test HIV negative, does that mean that my sex partner is HIV negative also?](#)

No. Your HIV test result reveals only your HIV status. Your negative test result does not indicate whether or not your partner has HIV. HIV is not necessarily transmitted every time you have sex. Therefore, your taking an HIV test should not be seen as a method to find out if your partner is infected.

Ask your partner if he or she has been tested for HIV and what risk behaviors he or she has engaged in, both currently and in the past. Think about getting tested together.

It is important to take steps to reduce your risk of getting HIV. Not having (abstaining from) sex is the most effective way to avoid HIV. If you choose to be sexually active, having sex with one person who only has sex with you and who is uninfected is also effective. If you are not sure that both you and your partner are HIV negative, use a latex condom to help protect both you and your partner from HIV and other STDs. Studies have shown that latex condoms are very effective, though not 100%, in preventing HIV transmission when used correctly and consistently. If either partner is allergic to latex, plastic (polyurethane) condoms for either the male or female can be used.