



# HIV Antibody Testing Options

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that more than 1,000,000 people in the U.S. are infected with HIV, and approximately 25 percent do not know they are infected and may continue to engage in behavior that could jeopardize their health and the health of others.

**Testing Programs:** Voluntary counseling, testing, and referral programs (CTR) provide people an opportunity to learn their current HIV status, receive counseling about any behavioral changes needed to avoid infection or infecting others, and receive information and referrals to additional prevention programs, medical care or other services.

**Confidential HIV Testing** means you give your name when getting tested. Only medical personnel or state health departments have access to the test results. You must provide written permission before this information can be revealed to others.

**Anonymous HIV testing** means that no name is given to the testing center and only you are aware of the results. Anonymous testing is available in 39 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Test results are given by randomly assigned numbers at the time of testing.

## Types of HIV Antibody Tests

There are several HIV antibody tests being used today. All testing options are not available in all areas. Contact your local health department for the tests available in your area.

**Standard blood test:** This was the first HIV antibody test developed and made available, and is the most widely used. With this test, an initial assay is used (the ELISA) and confirmed using a more specific test (the Western Blot).

**Oral mucosal transudate test:** This test, an alternative to the standard blood test, uses a specially treated pad placed in a person's mouth and gently rubbed between the lower cheek and gum. The pad collects an oral fluid called oral mucosal transudate (OMT). This fluid contains HIV antibodies in an HIV- infected person. This test does not test for HIV in saliva.

**Urine HIV antibody test:** The urine HIV-1 testing method is a painless, non-invasive option for getting an HIV antibody test. This test uses the urine EIA (ELISA) and urine Western Blot technique to detect HIV antibodies and is FDA – licensed as an alternative to the blood test system. This test eliminates accidental needle sticks and exposure-related dangers, protecting the patient and healthcare worker.

**Rapid HIV antibody tests:** Where the standard HIV antibody testing procedure requires up to two weeks for results, the rapid test gives results in 5-60 minutes. For rapid blood testing the fingertip is cleaned with alcohol and pricked with a lancet to get a small drop of blood. The blood is collected with a specimen loop and transferred to a vial, where it is mixed with a developing solution. For oral testing oral fluid specimens are obtained by swabbing gums with test devices and placed in a solution. In as little as 20 minutes, the test device will indicate if HIV-1 antibodies are present in the solution.

Although the results of rapid screenings will be reported in point-of-care settings, as with all screening tests for HIV, if the test gives a reactive test result, that result must be confirmed with an additional specific test.

To determine which type of rapid testing is being performed, call the organization directly.

**Home Testing Kit:** This do-it-yourself test kit uses the same technology as the standard blood test. Individual blood samples are collected at home and mailed to a laboratory. Test results are provided over the telephone. The serum home testing kit is available at many drug stores. Currently there is only one FDA approved home sample collection kit.

For more information about testing options in your area, contact your local health department or CDC-INFO (formerly the National AIDS Hotline) at 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636).

## **Sources of Anonymous testing in Berks County:**

**Berks AIDS Network** - Walnut Street, Reading, Pennsylvania 19601

**Hispanic Center of Reading and Berks County**, - Reading, Pennsylvania 19603

**Pennsylvania Department of Health**, - 6th & Cherry St., Reading, Pennsylvania 19602

**Planned Parenthood of North East Pennsylvania** - Reading, Pennsylvania 19602

**New Directions Treatment Services** - West Reading, Pennsylvania 19611