

HIV: Understanding the Test

HIV, or human immunodeficiency virus, is a virus that attacks the immune system.

This makes it hard for your body to fight off infection and disease.

HIV is the virus that causes AIDS.

But having HIV doesn't mean you have AIDS.

In fact, if HIV is found, there are medicines you can take that fight the virus.

They help keep your immune system healthy and can prevent AIDS.

Anyone can get HIV.

That's why experts recommend that all teens and adults get tested as part of their regular medical care.

The test looks for HIV antibodies and antigens in your blood.

If they are found, it means the test is positive.

If these things are not found in your blood, it most likely means you don't have HIV.

But if you may have been exposed to HIV and you test negative for it, you may need to have the test again later.

That's because it can take time for the signs of HIV to show up in your blood.

Some people are afraid to be tested for HIV. Or they don't think they need to be tested.

But it's really important for all teens and adults to get tested. Here are four reasons why.

First, it may give you peace of mind.

Routine medical screenings, including HIV testing, can help you keep your health on track.

And you can take comfort in knowing you're taking care of your health.

Second, the sooner you find out you have HIV and start getting treated, the better your chances of staying healthy and preventing AIDS.

Third, treatment can help prevent the spread of HIV to other people.

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And finally, if you're pregnant and you have HIV, getting treated can prevent your baby from being born with HIV.

Remember, experts recommend teens and adults get an HIV test as part of their regular medical care.

HIV testing is also recommended for anyone who is pregnant.

Your doctor may want you to get tested more often if you are at higher risk for getting HIV.

For example, your risk is higher if you have unprotected sex with someone who has HIV or if you share needles or other injection supplies with someone who has HIV.

If you are at risk of being infected with HIV, you and your doctor can talk about medicines that lower your risk by a lot.

Taking these medicines is called pre-exposure prophylaxis (or PrEP).

You can get an HIV test in doctors' offices, hospitals, and public health clinics.

You can also do a test at home.

If you do a home test, use an approved test and follow the instructions carefully.

Knowing more about why a test is done and what the results may mean can help you and your doctor better understand your health.

Remember, if you have questions or concerns about the test, just ask your doctor.