



# Counseling and Testing

## HIV Questions and Answers

### Why take an HIV test?

An HIV test is free, simple, and confidential, and can help you make smart choices about your health.

### What are HIV and AIDS?

- HIV is the virus that causes AIDS.
- AIDS is a late-stage disease that involves severe damage to the immune system.

### How is HIV spread?

- Through blood, semen, fluid from the vagina, and breast milk.
- Having vaginal or anal sex without a condom.
- Women with HIV can pass the virus to their children before or during birth or when they breastfeed.
- Sharing needles and works when injecting drugs.
- Contact with blood from another person.

### Why is it important to get tested for HIV?

- Because people can have HIV for years without symptoms, an HIV test is the only sure way to know your status.
- Many people do not find out they have HIV until they become sick. These people miss the chance to get early treatment that prevents more serious illness and keeps them feeling well.
- If you know your HIV status early you improve your chances of fighting HIV and living a longer, healthier life.

### Should I get an HIV test?

You may want to think about taking an HIV test if you:

- Have had more than one sex partner.
- Have had anal or vaginal sex without a condom.
- Are a man who has sex with other men.
- Inject drugs.
- Have had a sexually transmitted disease.
- Have been diagnosed with hepatitis B or C.
- Believe that any of these things apply to your partner.

### How often should I get tested?

- Every sexually active adult should get tested at least once in their life.
- If any of the things listed above apply to you, it is a good idea to get tested every year. If more than one of the things listed above apply to you, it is a good idea to get tested more often.
- Even if you have sex with only one partner, you could still be at risk for HIV, depending on what risks your partner takes.

### Can anyone make me take an HIV test?

- No. It is up to you whether or not you get an HIV test.
- No one may test you for HIV without your written consent.
- Even if you have signed a form in the past to receive medical care, state law says that you must sign another form before a health care provider can test you for HIV.

### Where can I go to get an HIV test?

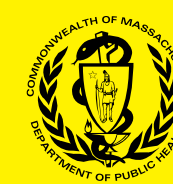
- Your doctor or health care provider.
- One of the HIV testing programs across Massachusetts. To find a test site near you, call 800-235-2331 or visit [www.mass.gov/dph/aids](http://www.mass.gov/dph/aids), or review sites listed in this brochure.
- If you go to the hospital for urgent medical care, you may also be offered an HIV test.
- Some sites offer tests where they give you a number instead of using your name.

### Will I have to pay for the test?

- Many places in Massachusetts give free HIV tests.
- Testing is also covered by most health insurance plans.
- See the back of this brochure for a list of sites.



Massachusetts Department  
of Public Health  
HIV/AIDS Bureau  
[www.mass.gov/dph/aids](http://www.mass.gov/dph/aids)



## What kind of test can I take to find out my HIV status?

There are three main types of HIV tests:

### Conventional test

- This is a blood test. The person performing the test uses a needle to draw blood from your arm into a set of tubes. The blood is sent to a lab.
- You get your test results in about two weeks.

### Oral fluids test (also called OMT)

- With this test, fluids and cells are taken from the inside of your mouth using a tool that looks like a toothbrush. The sample is sent to a lab.
- You get your test results in about two weeks.

### Rapid test

- The person performing this test may take a small amount of blood from the tip of your finger or fluid from your mouth.
- The sample may be tested right there on the spot.
- You may get your test results in about 20 minutes.
- If the test result comes back negative, it means that you are HIV negative and do not need more testing.
- If the test gets a reaction, you may be HIV positive. You need to have a blood test to be sure. It will take about two weeks to get the results from this second test.



## What happens if I take a test and it comes back negative?

- If your test is negative, you will be asked when you last had unprotected sex or shared needles.
- If you recently had unprotected sex or shared needles, you should be re-tested six weeks from then. This is because sometimes HIV tests cannot detect recent infections.

## What happens if I take a test and it comes back positive?

- If your test comes back positive, it is important to make an appointment with a health care provider as soon as possible.
- The person who gives you your test results will help you find a health care professional and a case manager if you don't have one.
- Your case manager can help you get medical care and medications even if you are unable to pay.

## If I have HIV, will I definitely develop AIDS or get sick?

- No. Today there are many effective treatments for HIV.
- These treatments can help prevent serious illness, including AIDS.
- If you get care quickly, you have a good chance of living a long and healthy life.

## Where can I get more information?

### AIDS Action Hotline

English and Español: 800-235-2331  
TTY: 617-437-1672 [www.aac.org](http://www.aac.org)

### Massachusetts Substance Abuse Information Help Line

English and Español: 800-327-5050  
TTY: 617-536-5872

### MDPH HIV Testing Programs

#### Greater Boston

Boston Happens  
Children's Hospital Boston  
Boston: 617-355-8127

Boston Health Care  
for the Homeless  
Boston: 617-654-1000

\*Boston Medical Center  
Boston: 617-414-4495  
Spanish, Haitian-Creole

Boston Public Health  
Commission Needle Exchange  
Boston: 617-771-2138

Cambridge Cares About AIDS  
Cambridge: 617-661-3040  
Spanish, Ugandan

\*Cambridge Health Alliance  
Somerville: 617-591-6767  
Spanish, Portuguese

Centro Latino de Chelsea  
Chelsea: 617-884-3238  
Spanish

Dotwell  
Dorchester: 617-474-1439

East Boston Neighborhood  
Health Center  
East Boston: 617-568-4622  
Spanish

\*Fenway Community Health Center  
Boston: 617-267-0159  
Spanish

\*Martha Eliot  
Community Health Center  
Jamaica Plain: 617-971-2329  
Spanish

Massachusetts Alliance of  
Portuguese Speakers  
Allston: 800-232-7725 or  
617-787-0557  
Portuguese

Mattapan Community Health Center  
Mattapan: 617-296-0061  
Spanish, French, Haitian-Creole

Quincy Medical Center  
Quincy: 617-376-4037

Victory Programs  
Boston : 617-357-8182 x15

#### Central Region

Family Health Center of Worcester  
Worcester: 508-860-7937  
or 508-860-7949  
Spanish, French, Portuguese,  
Cambodian

Gardner  
Visiting Nurse Association  
Gardner, Fitchburg, Leominster:  
800-382-7305  
Spanish

\*Great Brook Valley Health Center  
Worcester: 508-854-3260  
Spanish

Health Awareness Services of  
Central Massachusetts  
888-442-7448

Worcester:  
508-753-0800  
Southbridge:  
508-765-5929  
Milford:  
508-478-4982  
Framingham:  
508-935-2960  
Spanish, Portuguese

#### Northeast Region

Greater Lawrence Family  
Health Center  
Lawrence: 978-975-1878 x8504  
Spanish, Portuguese

Health and Educational Services  
Beverly/Gloucester:  
978-927-4506 x222  
Pager: 508-727-8937  
Spanish

Lowell Community Health Center  
Lowell: 978-970-2730  
Spanish, Cambodian, Shona  
(Zimbabwe)

\*Lynn Community Health Center  
Lynn: 781-581-3900  
Spanish

#### Southeast Region

AIDS Support Group  
of Cape Cod (ASGCC)  
Provincetown:  
508-487-8311 or  
866-NO-TO-HIV (866-668-6448)  
Mid and Upper Cape:  
508-274-5428  
\*\*Also provides hepatitis A and B  
vaccinations\*\*

Brockton Area Multi-Services, Inc.  
(BAMSI) - Cope Center  
Brockton: 508-583-3405  
Spanish

\*Cape Cod Hospital – Infectious  
Disease Clinical Services  
Hyannis: 508-862-5650 or  
888-711-0117

Community Counseling of Bristol  
County – Project ACT  
Taunton: 508-977-8142

Falmouth Human Services  
Falmouth: 508-274-5428

Greater New Bedford  
Community Health Center  
New Bedford: 508-992-6553  
Spanish, Portuguese

Martha's Vineyard Family Planning  
Martha's Vineyard:  
508-693-1208

Nantucket AIDS Network (NAN)  
Nantucket: 508-228-3955

Outer Cape Health Services  
Provincetown:  
508-487-9395

Seven Hills Foundation  
New Bedford: 508-992-0457  
Portuguese

\*Stanley Street Treatment &  
Resources (SSTAR)  
Fall River: 508-324-3561  
Spanish, French, Portuguese



#### Western Region

\*Bay State Medical Center –  
Brightwood Health Center  
Springfield: 413-794-8725  
Pager: 413-794-3222

(follow voice prompts  
and ask for Sandy Ortega)  
Spanish

\*Bay State Medical Center – Mason  
Square Neighborhood Health Center  
Springfield: 413-794-8723  
Spanish

Berkshire Medical Center –  
Neighborhood Health Center  
Pittsfield: 413-447-2654  
Spanish

Caring Health Center  
Springfield: 413-739-1100  
Spanish

Cooley Dickinson Hospital – CEPA  
Holyoke: 413-536-8721  
Spanish

Holyoke Community Health Center  
Holyoke: 413-420-2130 x2139  
Spanish

New North Citizens Council  
Springfield: 413-733-4053  
Spanish

Northern Educational Services  
Springfield: 413-731-0651

\*Tapestry Health  
Northampton: 800-696-7752  
or 413-747-5144 x105  
Spanish

\*Integrated sites provide HIV  
counseling and testing, viral  
hepatitis vaccination and  
screening for at-risk individuals,  
and STD screening and/or referral.

**For additional HIV testing sites, go to [www.mass.gov/dph/aids](http://www.mass.gov/dph/aids),  
call 800-235-2331, or ask your health care provider.**