

# HIV Oral Point of Care Test

Human immunodeficiency (ih mew no dee FISH en cee) virus, or HIV, causes a number of different health problems. These include AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome). The HIV virus is passed from person to person only in certain ways:

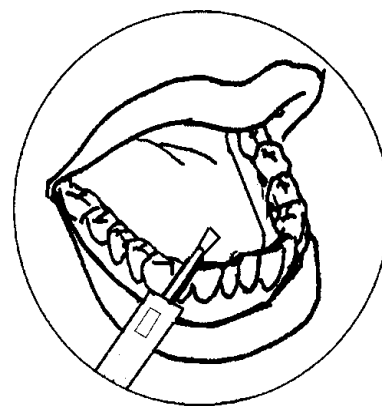
- Sexual contact; oral, vaginal or anal
- Contact with blood from an infected person (sharing needles, blood transfusion, needle stick injury to a health care worker)
- From mother to infant

It takes many months and even years for the HIV virus to cause enough harm to the body to result in illness or disease, so an HIV-infected person may not look sick.

A way for doctors to find out if a person has HIV is to look for HIV antibodies (AN te bod ees).

Antibodies are made by the body as soon as the person is infected with HIV. The HIV virus attacks the T-4 cells in the body that help the immune system fight off disease.

When the immune system is badly damaged, people with HIV can be infected by many different and unusual germs.



**Picture 1** Swabbing the inside of the mouth

## The oral point of care test

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend that adolescents and adults between the ages of 13 and 64 be tested for HIV as part of their routine medical care.

The Oral Point of Care test checks for HIV antibodies. The test is done by swabbing the inside of the patient's mouth with a stick that looks like a cotton swab (Picture 1). It does not hurt. The results are available in 20 minutes.

### **If the test is negative**

If the screening test was negative, it means that no HIV antibodies were found in your body. You could still have HIV if you are in the “window period.” The window period is the time between when a person may have been exposed to HIV and when a test can tell if they have HIV. The window period for the test we use is 90 days.

If you continue to engage in activities that put you at risk for HIV, you should retest at least every year. There is a medicine called PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) that you can take every day to help prevent HIV.

### **If the test is positive**

If the screening test is positive, you will be given your results and a packet of information. Blood work will also be done to confirm the results from the Oral Point of Care Test, but these results will not be available right away. In the meantime, you should avoid activities that transmit the virus. All positive test results will be referred to the Family AIDS Clinic and Education Services (FACES) Clinic at Nationwide Children's Hospital. The FACES staff has over 30 years' experience working with HIV. They provide many services to persons living with HIV. Appointments include time with a nurse, social worker, doctor, dietitian, peer navigator, and pharmacist. When a referral is received at the FACES clinic and labs are reviewed, staff will contact you to set up an appointment.

### **How HIV is spread**

HIV can only live inside the body. **It can only be spread through INTIMATE CONTACT** between an infected person and an uninfected person. HIV is passed to another person only when blood, semen, vaginal fluids or breastmilk that contains HIV gets into that person's body.

Examples of **intimate contact** and ways of spreading the virus are:

- Through contact with an infected person's blood (sharing dirty needles, razors or toothbrushes; transfusions of infected blood).
- By having sexual contact (contact with semen or vaginal secretions): man-to-man, woman-to-man or woman-to-woman with a person infected with HIV. This includes vaginal, oral and anal sex; sexual abuse, and rape.
- From an infected mother to her baby through the placenta during pregnancy, during delivery (vaginal and C-section) or in the breastmilk to her baby.

## How HIV is not spread

The HIV virus is **NOT** spread through "casual contact." Some ways HIV/AIDS is **NOT** spread are:

- Normal day-to-day contact like shaking hands, being in the same room or hugging.
- Sharing plates, cups or silverware with someone who is HIV positive.
- Using a phone or toilet seat after someone who is HIV positive.
- Sharing a swimming pool with someone who is HIV positive.

So far no other family members of HIV infected children have gotten the virus from casual contact.

## Signs of HIV infection

Some of the more common health problems in HIV-positive individuals are:

- Infections that keep coming back, do not go away or are more severe than in others
- Swollen glands in more than one area (neck, armpits, groin)
- White patches in the mouth, on the tongue or in the throat (thrush) that do not go away
- Repeated fevers
- Diarrhea (3 or more loose stools per day) that continues for several weeks
- Repeated ear infections (more than 8 in a year)
- Certain kinds of tumors or cancers

## Testing information

The FACES clinic offers HIV testing that is **free, painless and fast**. **HIV testing is also available** at various other locations in the community. Tests are confidential. You do not need an appointment.

### Testing and counseling are available at:

Nationwide Children's Hospital (FACES clinic)  
380 Butterfly Gardens Drive  
Livingston Ambulatory Center, Level 2, Suite B  
Columbus, Ohio 43215  
Phone: (614) 722-6060; Fax: (614) 722-6770  
<http://www.nationwidechildrens.org/hiv-clinic>

**Our current testing hours are:**

- Monday and Wednesday - 8am to 11am and 1pm to 4pm
- Thursday - 8am to 11am and 1pm to 6pm
- Friday - 8am to 11am

**For more information**

- If you would like more information about HIV, you may call the CDC National AIDS Hotline at 1-800-342-2437. They are open 24 hours a day.
- If you have any questions, please call the Nationwide Children's Hospital Family AIDS Clinic and Education Services (FACES) Program at (614) 722-6060.
- The FACES program can prescribe PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis), a once-a-day pill that can prevent HIV. Call (614) 722-6060 to set up an appointment if you are interested in PrEP.