

# HIV and HIV testing



## Summary

- Information about HIV and sexual health is important for everyone to be safe, healthy and respectful.
- It is important to get an HIV test every 3-12 months.
- Having safe sex can keep you healthy and well.

## What is HIV?

HIV is a virus that can make you sick. People can get HIV during unsafe sex with someone who has HIV and is not on HIV treatment.

Unsafe sex is when you have sexual activity without a condom or without taking PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis). PrEP is a medication that can prevent HIV for people at risk of getting HIV.

HIV can also be passed on from:

- mother to child during pregnancy, childbirth or breastfeeding.
- piercing your skin with equipment that is not sterilised.
- sharing needles, drug injecting equipment and tattooing equipment.

Without proper treatment, HIV can make you very sick.

## Can anyone get HIV?

Anyone who has unsafe sexual activity can get HIV. Some people like men who have sex with men, people who inject drugs and share needles, and people who have been diagnosed with an STI are at higher risk of HIV.

## How do I know if I have HIV?

Most people with HIV do not have symptoms. The only way to know if you have HIV is to get an HIV test. If you have a partner, it is important that they get tested too.

### Signs or symptoms of HIV can be:

- flu like symptoms
- a sore throat
- swollen glands
- a rash



You cannot get HIV from kissing, hugging, holding hands, spitting, coughing, sneezing, toilet seats or sharing food or drinks.



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## How can I protect myself from HIV?

- Use condoms during sexual activity.
- Get a regular HIV test every 3-12 months.
- Don't share injecting or tattooing equipment with anyone. Use safe and clean equipment.
- Taking PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis). PrEP is a medication that can prevent HIV for people at risk of getting HIV. Talk to the NSW Sexual Health Infolink on 1800 451 624 for more information.
- If you have had unprotected sex or have shared injecting equipment and think you could be at risk of HIV, visit your local hospital as soon as possible. There is medication you can take to reduce the risk of getting HIV.

**When a person with HIV is on HIV treatment, HIV cannot be passed on to sexual partners.**

## What is an HIV test?

HIV tests are private medical checks that tell you if you have HIV. A doctor will ask questions about your sexual history to find out the tests you need. It is important to answer these questions honestly even if you feel nervous. These conversations are private.

HIV is tested for by a blood test. It is not tested for every time you have a blood test. You need to talk to your doctor to get an HIV test. Your doctor cannot share the results of your test with anyone without your permission.

There is no shame in getting tested for HIV, it is a normal part of staying healthy and well.

## When should I get an HIV test?

Anyone who is sexually active should get an HIV test every 3-12 months or:

- if you think you might have HIV
- if you had sexual activity, particularly anal sex, without a condom or PrEP medication
- if the condom broke or fell off during sexual activity
- when you have a new partner
- if you notice any unusual symptoms

## Where can I get an HIV test?

- Local doctor – this may cost money
- Sexual health clinic – this is free.
- Call the NSW [Sexual Health Infolink](https://www.shil.nsw.gov.au) on 1800 451 624 to find a location near you.

## Can you treat HIV?

There is no cure for HIV but there is treatment. HIV is treated with tablets or injections to keep you healthy and well.

**HIV treatment is free for everyone in Australia, even if you do not have a Medicare card.**

People with HIV who are on treatment have healthy long lives and can have children without risk of transmission to their partner or family.

## What do I do if the doctor tells me I have HIV?

If the doctor tells you that you have HIV (tested positive), it is important that you get treatment, so you feel healthy and well. Take your medicine the way your doctor says, even if you feel better. You should also tell your sexual partners so they can get tested and treated too. This is a sign of respect.



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## Where can I get help or more information?

To find out more information about HIV and HIV testing in New South Wales, these services can help:

Service	What does it do?	Contact information
<b>healthdirect</b>	A free phone service where you can get health information and advice on any topic.	1800 022 222 Open 24 hours <a href="http://www.healthdirect.gov.au/">http://www.healthdirect.gov.au/</a>
<b>NSW Sexual Health Infolink</b>	A free phone line where you can talk to a nurse about HIV and HIV testing.	1800 451 624 9am–5.30pm Monday to Friday <a href="https://www.shil.nsw.gov.au/palm-scheme">https://www.shil.nsw.gov.au/palm-scheme</a>
<b>NSW Sexual Health Clinics</b>	Free sexual health clinics for people in NSW.	Call the NSW Sexual Health Infolink (1800 451 624) to find your closest clinic. <a href="https://www.shil.nsw.gov.au/palm-scheme">https://www.shil.nsw.gov.au/palm-scheme</a>
<b>Positive Life NSW</b>	Free support and advice for people living with, and impacted by HIV.	1800 245 677 contact@positivelife.org.au Learn more about Positive Life <a href="https://www.positivelife.org.au/about-us/contact-us/">https://www.positivelife.org.au/about-us/contact-us/</a>
<b>Country Liaison Officer (CLO)</b>	CLOs are people appointed by Pacific and Timor-Leste governments to support workers in Australia. They can provide you with local support.	You can find all current CLO contact details on the PALM website <a href="https://www.palmscheme.gov.au/contact">https://www.palmscheme.gov.au/contact</a>
<b>PALM scheme support line</b>	If your employer cannot answer your questions, you can call the PALM scheme support service line.	1800 51 51 31 <a href="mailto:PALM@dewr.gov.au">PALM@dewr.gov.au</a> The support service line and email inbox are monitored 8:30 am–6:30 pm AEST -calls after hours should be for critical incidents only
<b>Multicultural HIV &amp; Hepatitis Service</b>	The Multicultural HIV and Hepatitis Service (MHAHS) works with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities in NSW to improve health and well-being in relation to HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C.	1800 108 098 <a href="https://www.mhahs.org.au/index.php/en/">https://www.mhahs.org.au/index.php/en/</a>
<b>NSW Council for Pacific Communities/Community Connections</b>	The NSW Council for Pacific Communities runs the Community Connections Program. Community Connections helps PALM workers adapt to life in NSW and feel connected to NSW communities.	0451 021 919 <a href="mailto:CommunityConnections@SalvationArmy.org.au">CommunityConnections@SalvationArmy.org.au</a> <a href="https://www.nswcpc.org.au/">https://www.nswcpc.org.au/</a>

If you would like an interpreter to help you access health services or information, please contact the Translating and Interpreting Service on 131 450.

