

## How Does HIV Testing Work?

For many people, getting tested for HIV is important because they want to know their HIV status (whether they are HIV positive or HIV negative). Getting tested is the only way to know their status, and the results give a person important information on how to navigate their sexual relationships and maintain their health.

### **How does the test work?**

An HIV test looks for HIV antibodies, which can take three weeks to three months to form in response to infection. The HIV "window period" is the time between when a person first gets an HIV infection and when the test will show that they have it. In some cases, HIV can be detected a few weeks after infection; but in other cases, the window period can take up to three months. A person with HIV who is in the window period may test negative, but they still have the infection and can transmit it to others.

### **How often should I get tested?**

People have different testing routines, based on the number of potential exposures to HIV. Many people who engage in activities that have a lower likelihood of transmission get tested every six months or more. Many people who engage in activities that have a higher likelihood of transmission get tested more regularly, as often as every three weeks. For help exploring what testing routine might work for you, give us a call at (519) 570-3687.

### **What kind of tests do you do at ACCKWA?**

There are two types of HIV tests available through ACCKWA's clinic and Public Health clinics: the Standard Test and the Rapid Test. Both of these tests include pre and post-test counseling that is conducted by the public health nurse. Pre-test counseling is a conversation with the nurse about how a person is feeling about the test, to answer any questions they have, and to help give the nurse a sense of their risk level.

The Standard Test involves taking a blood sample from a vein, which is then sent to a lab to be tested for the presence of HIV antibodies. It usually takes one to two weeks for the test results to come back. The waiting period for results can be a factor in whether a person wants a standard test or a rapid test.

### **HIV Rapid Test**

The HIV Rapid Test collects a blood sample from a finger prick, using a one-time use lancet. Results from a rapid test are available within a minute. The entire administration of the test is often about 15 minutes, including pre- and post-test counseling. Below are some pictures of the rapid test, with more specific details about each step.



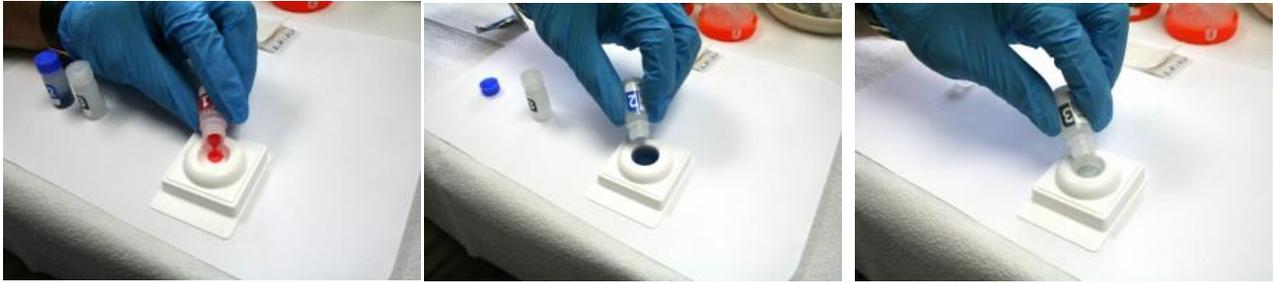
The nurse sterilizes a finger with an alcohol swab



The nurse uses the sterile lancet to prick the finger and gently squeezes the finger to draw blood



The nurse collects one to two drops of blood in a sterile vial, or "pipette"



The nurse mixes the blood with solutions, and from the third bottle, pours the sample into the well



A non-reactive result has one dot



A reactive result has two dots

A non-reactive result (one dot) means that the test didn't detect any antibodies. A reactive result (two dots) means that the HIV antibodies are likely present. A standard blood test is drawn and sent to the lab to confirm every reactive result.



The nurse bandages the finger

The nurse will conduct post-test counseling, answer any questions the person has, and provide any information about follow-up as required.

If you still have questions, give us a call at 519-570-3687.