

## Why is HIV testing important?

- When you are HIV infected you do not get sick right away, which means that you can infect others with the HIV virus before you come to know your own HIV status.
- You can't see when someone has HIV, only testing will tell you this.
- Just like diabetes and high blood pressure, HIV can be managed through healthy living and the taking of treatment. Treatment will work better if you take it at the right time and you take treatment as soon after diagnosis as possible, and do not wait until you are very sick.
- By taking the test you are taking control over your health and your life!
- Testing for HIV is a way of showing love and respect for your partner and yourself!

*Everyone should know their status so that they can look after their own health and protect other people in their lives.*

- You might be tested for HIV along with testing for other illnesses such as TB, Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), Glucose, BP and pregnancy to ensure that you know your general health status.

## Who should test for HIV?

- If you've ever had sex without a condom, or sex where the condom failed.
- If you've been exposed to somebody's blood without protection.

- If you are a drug user who has shared needles.
- If you are pregnant. If you are pregnant. If you have had unexplained illness that you cannot understand, it is important to test for HIV.
- If you are HIV-positive and give birth to a child without access to PMTCT treatment you should take your child for an HIV test.
- Children who have been breast-fed by an HIV-positive person.
- If you have an STI (sexually transmitted infection).
- If you have TB (tuberculosis).

## Know your rights when testing

- If you are 12 years or older you do not need your parents' consent for an HIV test.
- It is private and confidential and only you know the results and only you have the right to tell others your status.
- It is your decision and you have to give permission for the test to be carried out.
- No-one can discriminate against you if you are HIV-positive or use the results against you in any harmful way.

### 1. Pre-test counselling (before the test)

You will spend some time with a counsellor before the test to discuss:

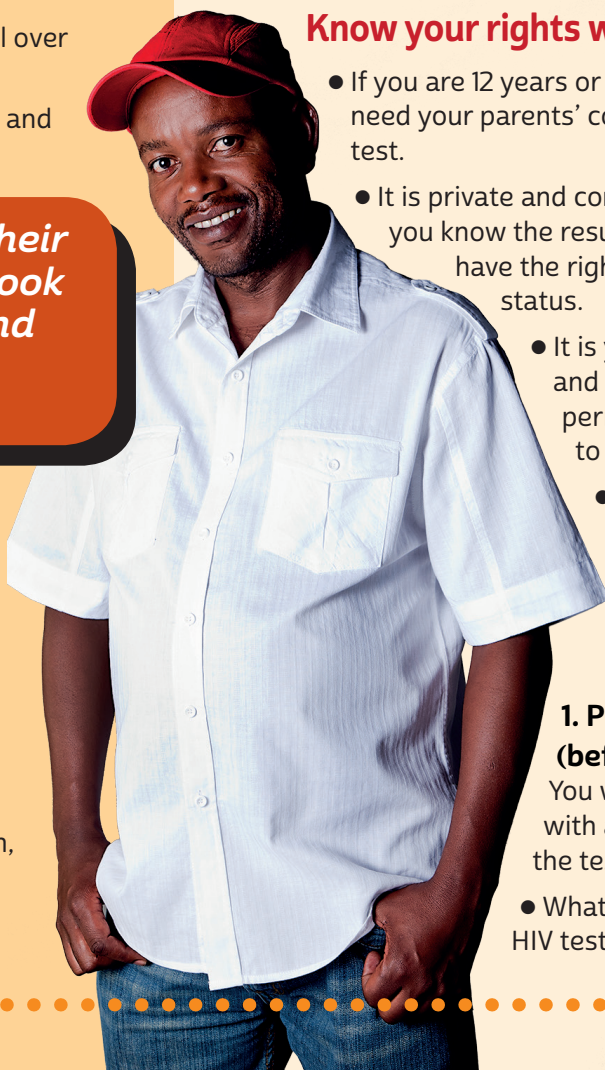
- What it means to have an HIV test and how it works.

*You don't have to give permission for the HIV test until you understand the whole procedure. You should always feel free to ask questions.*

- What it means if you receive a positive result.
- What it means if you receive a negative result.

### 2. HIV testing

- Can be done at all health care facilities and trained Community Based Organisations.
- The test tells you if you are infected with the HIV virus or not.
- A health care worker makes a small prick on the tip of your finger.
- The test is quick and painless ... about 15 minutes to get a result.
- If the 1st test is positive a second test is done to confirm the result.



### 3. Post-test counselling (after the test)

You will get post-test counselling if you test negative or positive. The counsellor will listen to what you say and try to encourage you to talk about how you feel about your test results. If you test HIV-positive, they will also advise you on what you should do next. Ask to be tested for TB.

*Remember that counsellors are trained to counsel and support you. Ask them as many questions as you like. You don't have to be ashamed or embarrassed by how you may feel or react.*

### Taking the next step

If you test HIV-negative it is very important that you:

- Retest within 3 months because when you are newly infected the virus is difficult to detect and may not show in the first test during this period ... it is called "being in the window period".
- Protect yourself and others and always practise safe sex.

**If you test HIV-positive it is very important that you know the following::**

- Start treatment immediately. Go to your nearest clinic for treatment.
- Getting treatment early and taking treatment faithfully can reduce the amount of HIV in the body (Viral Load), leading to a longer, healthier life.
- All HIV infected children should be on treatment. If you know your child is HIV

positive and not on treatment, please take him/her to the nearest clinic for treatment.

- Ask your partner to also go for an HIV test so that you can both know your HIV status and protect yourselves accordingly.

### Always practise safe sex to avoid re-infection

When you are HIV-positive you can become re-infected with HIV if you do not use protection during sex, which could mean that ARVs that previously worked do not work so well anymore and you may get sick more quickly.

### Ask to be tested for TB

TB is very common in HIV-positive people and the earlier you know your HIV status, the better it is for your health. TB is completely curable if treatment is taken properly.

For more information: [www.hivsa.com](http://www.hivsa.com)



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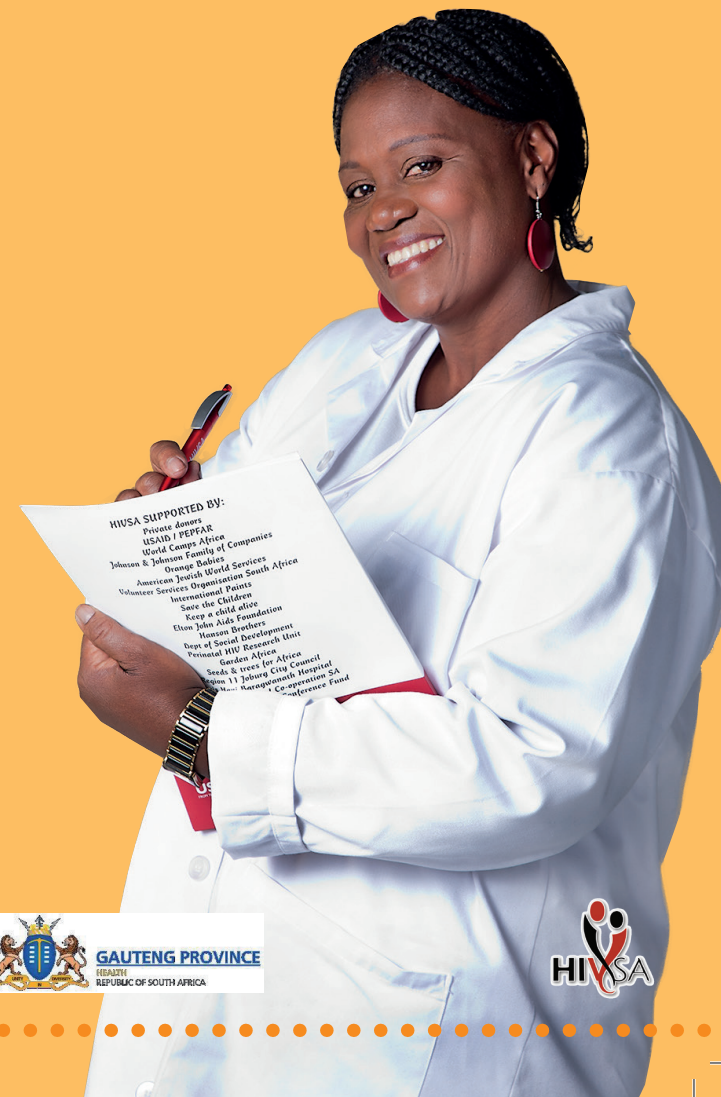
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**National AIDS Help Line: 0800 012 322 (toll free)**

**Contact HIVSA - Tel: +27 11 494 1900**

What YOU need to know about...

# HIV Counseling and Testing



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