

# Routine Testing: Client Information

## Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)

### What You Need To Know

- HIV testing is now **routine**.
- **Your health care provider will offer you a test.**
- Knowing your HIV status is important.
- The only way to know your results for sure is to have a test.
- You may also want to be tested for **hepatitis B, hepatitis C and other sexually transmitted infections.**
- Early care and/or treatment for HIV helps people to live longer, healthier lives.
- Positive test results are kept **confidential**.
- You will be offered **information and support** to help deal with your **diagnosis, care and treatment from a health care provider.**
- **You have the right to say no to HIV testing.**

**Say YES  
to the Test!**

### Routine HIV testing is recommended in Saskatchewan

**Knowing you are HIV negative is just as important as knowing you are HIV positive.** The only way to know for sure is to have a test.

Having HIV **can affect your current health care.** This includes how infections and cancers are treated.

#### Routine testing for HIV helps you:

- Access services and care earlier.
- Live a longer, healthier life with earlier treatment.
- Become actively involved in care.
- Decrease worry about possible infection.
- Prevent the spread of HIV to others.
- Avoid discrimination.

#### What do you need to know?

- **HIV** is a virus that attacks the immune system. The immune system helps your body fight off infection.
- HIV can lead to acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (**AIDS**) if not treated with medication.
- There is no cure for HIV, **but it can be treated. Treatment is free for everyone.**
- **HIV is different now. People living with HIV can have healthy lives, relationships and children.** Medication can lower the amount of virus in the body. People with lower amounts of virus are less likely to pass the infection to others.

#### HIV can be spread by:

- Sexual contact (unprotected vaginal, anal and oral).
- Blood contact.
- Sharing needles, syringes and other drug use equipment.
- Sharing equipment used for tattooing, piercing or acupuncture.
- Pregnancy, delivery or breastfeeding (A pregnant woman with HIV may pass it on to her child).

## Who can I talk to...

- **about having a test?**

Talk to your regular health care provider. Locate a local clinic by calling HealthLine at 811, or going online to: <http://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/health/diseases-and-conditions/human-immunodeficiency-virus-hiv/hiv-testing>

(Click “Filter” and choose HIV Testing, then click “Update”)

- **about consent, privacy & confidentiality?**

Talk to your nurse, doctor, privacy officer, or the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner at 1-877-748-2298 or (306)787-8350.

- **about the legal side of HIV testing & consent?**

Call the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network at 1-416-595-1666.

- **about HIV & hepatitis C?**

Call CATIE (Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange) at 1-800-263-1638 or go online: [www.catie.ca/en/home](http://www.catie.ca/en/home)

Saskatchewan HIV Collaborative  
For information and local resources go to [www.skshiv.ca](http://www.skshiv.ca)

## What are the 3 C’s of HIV testing?

1. **Confidentiality:** All your information is kept completely confidential.
2. **Counselling:** You should have enough information to feel comfortable with the choice to have an HIV test.
3. **Consent:** You have the right to say “no” to HIV testing.

## What do I need to know about the test?

- Test results may take up to **two weeks** to return. Your results will be sent to the health care provider who tested you.
- The tests may not detect early infection with HIV. If you may have been in **contact with HIV in the last 3 months, consider getting re-tested.**

## What if I test positive for HIV?

- You will be **notified** by a healthcare professional.
- Positive results are kept **confidential**. Access is strictly controlled under provincial acts and regulations.
- You will be offered **information and supports** to help deal with your diagnosis, follow-up care and treatment.
- All positive HIV test results are sent to your local **Medical Health Officer**. This is a public health doctor who will make sure that you are offered support and help.
- Your current and past sexual/drug use **partners** will be offered a test for HIV. A public health nurse can discuss with you the best way to tell your partners. The nurse can inform them **without** identifying you and can also help you find ways to tell all future partners.

## What if I test negative for HIV?

If you test negative for HIV, you may or may not be contacted, depending on where you were tested. Please talk with a health care provider about your test result, when you should have your next test and ways to help you stay negative.

