

About Your Visit Today

Everyone should know their HIV status.

Why?

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is the virus that causes Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS). If you are living with HIV, knowing your status and starting treatment early can help you live a long, healthy life and decreases the chance you will pass the virus on to others.¹

Routine HIV screening is recommended by the CDC as part of general care for individuals 13 to 64. Many people living with HIV (PLWH) do not experience any symptoms, and one in eight PLWH do not know their status. Anyone can get HIV if they have been exposed to infected blood, semen, vaginal fluids, rectal mucus, or breast milk.¹ The only way to know your HIV status is to be screened.

How will the screening be conducted?

HIV screening is voluntary, confidential, and typically performed through a rapid screening or a blood draw for lab screening. Rapid screenings are conducted on the spot and results are ready in under 20 minutes. Blood draws are done after the visit, and the result times vary.² Your results are protected by state and federal laws and may only be released with your permission. We can give you information about where you can get an anonymous screening that is not linked to your identity in your area if preferred.

What if the results come back nonreactive?

Nonreactive results mean that HIV has not been detected in your body at this time. However, if you have had a recent potential exposure another screening may be needed, as it can take 2-12 weeks for HIV to be detected. It is important to get screened regularly for HIV. If you have a reason for HIV prevention, ask your provider about Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP), medication that provides a high level of protection from HIV in sexual and injection drug use exposures.²

What if the results come back reactive?

If a rapid screening comes back reactive, HIV has been detected in your body. A blood draw will be performed to confirm the results. Your provider will discuss this screening method with you and when to expect results.² A visit with an HIV care provider may be scheduled. If a blood draw was originally performed, then blood from the initial draw will be used for confirmation.

If the results confirm you are living with HIV, take a deep breath. Many medications are available to treat and manage HIV. We will help you access all the information, care, and support you need to live a long and healthy life.

All professionals in this care setting are required by law to ensure your medical information remains confidential, including that you were screened for HIV and the results.

How you can protect yourself¹

If you are sexually active:

- Use a latex or polyurethane condom when having vaginal or anal sex
- Avoid ejaculation inside your partner or having your partner ejaculate inside you
- Know your partners' HIV status
- Discuss your sexual activity with sexual partners and your care provider

If you use needles for injection, piercing, or tattooing:

- Avoid sharing any needles or syringes – purchase new syringes from a pharmacy or visit your local syringe exchange
- Avoid sharing supplies such as cookers, cotton filters, or water
- If you cannot obtain clean needles or syringes, be the first person to use the needle, clean with bleach, limit the number of people with whom you share equipment, and know their HIV and hepatitis status
- Make sure your tattoo artist or piercing professional takes new, unused needles out of a sealed package in front of you

Ask your Provider about PrEP

PrEP is medication that provides a high level of protection from HIV in sexual and injection drug use exposures.²

For more information

- State of Illinois AIDS/HIV and STD Hotline, 800-243-2437
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 800-448-0440, www.cdc.gov/hiv/basics
- Illinois HIV Care Connect, HIV/AIDS & STI Hotline 800-243-2437, AIDS Drug Assistance Program & Continuation of Health Insurance Coverage Services Hotline 800-825-3518, Clinician's Consultation Center Warmline 800-933-3413, PEpline 888-448-4911, 24/7 Perinatal HIV Hotline 800-439-4079, <https://hivcareconnect.com>
- National HIV, STD, and Hepatitis Testing Resources, www.gettested.cdc.gov
- Legal Council for Health and Justice, (312) 427-8990, <https://legalcouncil.org>

About PHIMC – The Public Health Institute of Metropolitan Chicago (PHIMC) enhances the capacity of public health and healthcare systems to promote health equity and expand access to services. Through organizational development, system transformation, fiscal management, and program implementation, PHIMC leads efforts to strengthen public health infrastructure in Illinois.

About POP – Protecting our Patients (POP) mobilizes care teams to address biases and stigmas that harm health experiences and outcomes of people in our care, including ourselves. POP initiatives promote practices that improve the experiences of people in care and support comprehensive care, including: 1) integrating routine HIV screening into care settings and 2) providing affirming care for all, especially people systematically marginalized from care systems. POP is a project of PHIMC funded by the Illinois Department of Public Health through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Sources:

¹<https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/basics/transmission.html>

²<https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/basics/hiv/testing.html>