

# HIV Awareness

The CDC estimates that more than 1.2 million people in the United States are living with HIV infection, and almost 1 in 7 (14%) are unaware of their infection.

Getting an HIV test is the only way to know if you have HIV. The CDC recommends that health care providers test everyone between the ages of 13 and 64 at least once as part of routine health care. You should get tested for HIV at least every year if you share needles/syringes or other equipment for injecting drugs, have a history of sexually transmitted diseases, or have had unprotected sex with multiple or anonymous partners. Some healthcare providers may recommend testing every 3-6 months if you have certain risk factors, including injection drug use and/or unprotected sex with others who engage in high-risk behaviors.

You should consult your healthcare provider to see how often you should be tested.

There are several types of HIV tests used in the United States:

## **Antibody Tests:**

The most common HIV tests look for HIV antibodies in your body, rather than looking for HIV itself. Enzyme immunoassay (EIA) tests use blood, oral fluid, or urine to detect HIV antibodies. Results for these tests can take up to two weeks. Rapid HIV antibody tests also use blood, oral fluid, or urine to detect HIV antibodies. Results for these tests can take 10–20 minutes. If you get a positive result from either of these tests, you will need to take another test, called a Western blot test, to confirm that result. It can take up to two weeks to confirm a positive result.

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## **Antigen Tests:**

These tests are not as common as antibody tests, but they can be used to diagnose HIV infection earlier—from 1-3 weeks after you are first infected with HIV. Antigen tests require a blood sample.

## **PCR Test (Polymerase chain reaction test):**

This test detects the genetic material of HIV itself, and can identify HIV in the blood within 2-3 weeks of infection.