



HIV Antibody and Antigen Test

Health Service Authority



HIV is not a death sentence, with the correct medication and care a patient can live a long and healthy life.

KNOW YOUR HIV STATUS

Public Health Department 244 2507

What is a HIV Antibody and Antigen test?

- a confidential blood test
- it is a simply, safe and reliable test
- can tell if you are carrying the antibodies against HIV in your blood. Antibodies are produced by the immune system in response to an infection. When there are antibodies present then the test is HIV positive: HIV is present in the body.
- antigen levels are typically high early in the course of infection.
- this combination test is performed to increase the likelihood that HIV infection is detected sooner after exposure occurs.

How long after possible exposure should I wait to be tested for HIV?

There can be a 'window period' of 3 to 12 weeks, which is the period between infection with HIV and the appearance of noticeable antibodies to the virus.

Beware: HIV can be transmitted on to another person during the window period even though an HIV test may not show that you are infected with HIV.

Why should I get a test?

If you are HIV positive, you can take necessary steps to access treatment, care and support services, thereby potentially prolonging your life for many years.

If you know you are infected, you can take all the necessary precautions to prevent the spread of HIV to others.

If you are pregnant and want to protect your unborn child.

It may be recommended by your health care provider if you are unwell, in order to obtain a more accurate medical assessment.

Are my test results confidential?

The results of the HIV test must be kept absolutely confidential.

Types of Tests

- 1) **HIV Combo**—it's a screening test (on island). One can get the results 24-48hours later. If positive for this test, then a confirmatory test will be sent to Florida
- 2) **HIV Viral Load**—which looks for the number of **HIV** copies in a milliliter (copies/mL) of blood, the confirmatory test, the bloods will be sent to Florida for confirmation of HIV, results can take up to three weeks.

WHAT DOES A POSITIVE RESULT MEAN?

- you may have been exposed to HIV and have developed antibodies to protect your body.
- a positive results does not mean that you have AIDS.

Get professional support—Thanks to new treatments, many people with HIV are living longer, healthier lives. It is very important to have a doctor who knows how to treat HIV.

WHAT DOES A NEGATIVE RESULT MEAN?

No HIV antibodies or antigens were found in your blood at the time of testing (make sure you have calculated the "window period"). Antibody/antigen testing will not detect **HIV** immediately after exposure, during the window before the development of antibodies and antigens. If you are tested too soon, your result may be negative despite the fact that you are infected (false negative).

If you are negative, make sure you stay that way: learn the facts about HIV transmission and prevention and avoid engaging in unsafe behavior.

Where can I get tested?

Ask your doctor or nurse about a test or call the Public Health Department, George Town Hospital at 244 2507 to arrange an appointment.

