

Better2Know HIV test Counselling and Consent form

WHEN YOU BOOK AN HIV TEST OR GROUP OF TESTS WHICH INCLUDES AN HIV TEST WITH BETTER2KNOW YOU WILL BE ASKED TO CONFIRM THAT YOU HAVE READ THIS DOCUMENT, UNDERSTOOD THE INFORMATION IT CONTAINS AND THAT YOU AGREE AND CONSENT TO BE TESTED FOR HIV AND ANY OTHER SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTION.

Please read this document very carefully and be sure that you understand it well. By agreeing to the information contained on this form you are giving your consent to be tested for HIV, the Human Immunodeficiency Virus. If your first test is positive, additional tests will be performed to confirm the diagnosis. If you are confirmed as HIV positive (that you carry the HIV virus) you will be referred to a specialist who will advise on appropriate actions to follow and any treatments if required.

What is HIV / AIDS?

HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is a retrovirus that can lead to Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS), a condition in which the immune system begins to fail, leading to life-threatening infections we ordinarily would be able to fight naturally. Infection with the HIV virus also may mean an increased risk of contracting other STIs.

There are two types of HIV, HIV-1 and HIV-2. Both types of HIV will damage the body by reducing the number of specific cells called CD4 cells. Your body relies on these cells to help it fight off infections and other diseases. The numbers of these CD4 cells are reduced by the HIV virus, so you are not able to fight off infections as you normally would be able to.

Infection with HIV occurs by the transfer of blood, semen, vaginal fluid, pre-ejaculate and breast milk. HIV can be spread by sexual contact with an infected person, by sharing needles and/or syringes (mainly for drug use) with someone who is infected, or through transfusions of infected blood.

Babies born to HIV-infected women may become infected before or during birth or through breast-feeding after birth.

Having unprotected vaginal or anal sex poses a high risk for catching HIV. Getting HIV through oral sex (both giving and receiving) is possible. HIV cannot be spread by toilet seats, door knobs, swimming pools, hot tubs, bath tubs, shared clothing, or eating utensils.

The majority of HIV infections are acquired through unprotected sexual relations. Complacency about HIV plays a key role in HIV risk. Sexual transmission can occur when infected sexual secretions of one partner come into contact with the genital, oral, or rectal mucous membranes of another partner.

Why should you get tested for HIV?

Knowing your HIV status can protect your health and the health of others. Regular testing for HIV is therefore essential if a person has unprotected sex (without condoms) with someone of 'unknown' HIV status or if you think you have been exposed to the virus.

The earlier you find out you are infected the better. Treatment for HIV infection is very effective and if it is started early, before the body has suffered any lasting damage from the infection, most people can expect to live a normal and healthy life. Getting tested will also give you and your partners the information you need to manage your sexual health. Knowing your HIV status will enable you to protect others from infection.

What HIV tests are available with Better2Know?

We offer two HIV tests. Our primary test is a test for HIV type 1 and HIV type 2 antibodies and the p24 antigen. This is a 4th generation test. The test is very reliable (over 99%) if performed 28 days or more after possible exposure to infection.

The second HIV test we offer is a test that detects the virus itself. This is a PCR Early Detection Test (Polymerase Chain Reaction) test and it will detect the viral genetic material if present. You can have this test as early as 10 days after you think you might have been exposed to infection.

Why can't I get tested immediately after I think I was exposed to the HIV virus?

Many diagnostic tests have what is called a "window period" or a time between possible infection and when the test will be able to accurately detect the infection. This window period is different for certain infections and also can depend on the type of test being performed. For HIV, the window period for the PCR Early Detection Test is 10 days, for the 4th generation test the window period is 28 days.

What do I do if I test negative?

A negative HIV test result means that the test did not detect any infection with the HIV virus. You need to be sure that you did not test too early (before the window period was finished) as this can lead to a wrong result. A negative result is good news but you should always consider carefully having another test 90 days after the last one to be certain of the result. This is good medical practice.

What do I do if I test positive?

If your HIV test is positive, Better2Know will do further tests on your sample to make sure of the result. You may be required to provide an additional blood sample and we will contact you if this is the case.

If you are confirmed as HIV positive, you need to be referred to a specialist doctor or Centre for evaluation, further tests and treatment if required. Better2Know will help you with this.

You will also be asked about your sexual partners, or other people that you have had contact with that might have caught the HIV virus from you. It is very important that these people be contacted and that they are also tested for HIV. This is the only way to know for certain if they are infected and if they are, they must be given appropriate medical help.

How is HIV / AIDS treated?

There is currently no cure for HIV or AIDS. However the condition is no longer considered to be life threatening if detected early and properly managed by specialists. Indeed, people with HIV who take treatment will remain healthy and should have a normal life expectancy.

Treatment consists of highly active anti-retroviral therapy (HAART), and advances continue to be made improving both quality of life and prognosis. If you have tested positive for HIV you must immediately contact your own Doctor or Specialist.

If you think you might have been exposed to the HIV virus, either through a risky sexual contact, injury or due to condom break, Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) should be considered. You should contact Better2Know or your healthcare provider to seek immediate advice. PEP is a course of HIV medication which you can take if you have been at risk of HIV infection. The course of HIV medication lasts 28 days and, if you start taking it within 72 hours of putting yourself at risk, it may be able to prevent you from becoming infected with HIV.

Keeping yourself and others safe from HIV

An infection with HIV cannot be cured, but you can do things to reduce the risk of catching the HIV virus. The virus can be caught from having sex with a man or a woman, it can be caught from sharing needles, or from any other activity where there is an exchange of body fluids from one person to another.

- To reduce the chance of HIV infection you should always use a condom when you have sex. Make sure it is new, clean and undamaged.
- To reduce the chance of HIV infection you should not share needles with anyone if you use drugs

Remember: Practicing safer sex (using condoms all the time) and never injecting drugs is the best way to keep you safe from HIV infection.

I acknowledge that I have read and fully understood this information about HIV and HIV testing, and that I fully understand that by agreeing I consent to HIV and other Sexually Transmitted Infections testing. I further explicitly consent and agree that my test results can and will be released to and reviewed by Better2Know and to any other doctor or qualified medical practitioner.

Signed: _____ Date: _____