



## Talk with Your Provider

As AIDSvu shows, nearly every area of the country is affected by HIV to some degree. Nationally, an estimated 1.1 million people are living with HIV, and in some parts of the country, HIV prevalence rates are as high as they are in parts of Africa. These numbers underscore the importance of everyone knowing his or her HIV status, especially if you live in an area with high prevalence. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that everyone aged 13-64 be routinely tested for HIV, and that people at high risk be tested at least annually.

An HIV test is the only way to know if you are infected with HIV – neither you nor your doctor can determine your HIV status without a test. CDC estimates that nationwide, more than one in five people living with HIV do not know it because they have not been tested and diagnosed. Knowing your HIV status is critical because if you are HIV-positive, getting medical treatment as early as possible increases your chances of living a long and healthy life and also reduces the chances you will unknowingly pass the virus to others.

### **Following are suggestions for talking with your health care provider about an HIV test:**

**If You Are Not Offered An HIV Test By Your Health Care Provider, Ask to Be Tested:** Even though HIV testing is recommended as part of routine medical care, many doctors and other health care providers do not offer testing for HIV unless you specifically ask to be tested. Don't assume that if your provider doesn't mention an HIV test that you do not need one. Even if you are seeing your doctor for some completely unrelated health matter, or just a routine physical, it can be a good opportunity to check your HIV status as well.

**If You Don't Have a Doctor:** If you do not have a regular doctor or other health care provider, there are many clinics that offer HIV testing, often free of charge. You can use AIDSvu to locate testing sites in your area. <http://aidsvu.org/testing/locations>

**It's Normal to Be Nervous:** If you are unsure how to ask for an HIV test, consider starting by saying that you've heard people in your area are supposed to be tested regularly for HIV and you want to take the test yourself, or by saying that a friend of yours was recently tested and you thought it is something you should do as well.

**Follow Up to Get the Results:** If you are not receiving a rapid HIV test that gives same-day results, be sure to ask before you leave when the results will be available. It can sometimes take one to two weeks. Then remember to follow up to get your results if you don't hear back – never assume that no news means that your HIV test was negative.

**If You Test Positive:** Today, many HIV-positive people lead long and healthy lives because of the availability of effective HIV medications. If you test positive for HIV, the most important step to take is to get connected with treatment information, medical care and support services as soon as possible. Talk with your doctor or staff at an HIV testing site or local AIDS service organization – they can help you find resources where you live, including programs which cover prescription drugs and provide financial assistance if you don't currently have health insurance.