

When do I offer an HIV test?

- Your patient asks for an HIV test, a sexually transmissible infection screen or a hepatitis C virus test.
- Your patient has a sexually transmissible infection.
- Your patient has migrated from or has travelled to a high HIV prevalence country and:
 - has had high-risk sexual contact such as unprotected vaginal and/or anal intercourse.
 - has potentially been exposed to HIV through other means, such as shared injecting equipment or had an unsterile tattoo.
 - has potentially been exposed to unscreened blood or blood products through medical procedures.
- Your patient discloses high-risk sexual contact with someone who has migrated from, or recently travelled to, a high HIV prevalence country.
- Your male patient discloses high-risk sexual contact such as unprotected anal intercourse with another man.
- Your patient has ever shared injecting drug equipment including needles, syringes, spoons, tourniquets and swabs.

Pre-test counselling

- Develop a rapport with your patient. It may take **several consultations** before they are ready to discuss HIV testing.
- Be up to date with **HIV information**. Contact the Australasian Society for HIV Medicine (ASHM) or your local sexual health service for GP information.
- Assess your patient's language needs. **Get an interpreter** to ensure you are understood. Call the **free Doctor's Priority Line 1300 131 450** to have priority access to the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS).
- Inform your patient that information is **confidential** and about **your legal responsibilities** regarding confidentiality. Visit the NSW Health website for state government policies.
- Discuss possible **transmission routes of HIV** through semen and vaginal fluid, blood and from mother to child.
- Explain that there is a **3-month window period**, what an **antibody** test is and what the test involves.
- Prepare your patient for the possibility of a **positive result**. Ask your patient what they think they will do if the result is either negative or positive.
- Briefly explain the **natural history** of HIV and inform your patient that treatment can delay disease progression.
- Inform your patient of **treatment options available in Australia**. Be aware that eligibility for Medicare will depend on each person's visa status.
- Explain that positive results go to the Department of Health but the **patient is not identified by name**. Use coded patient names on pathology forms, eg first two initials of their first name and first two initials of their second name.
- Ensure your patient **understands** what you are saying. One way to do this is to ask them to repeat information back to you. Be aware of **cultural understandings** of sickness and wellbeing.
- Provide **information in the patient's first language** if available or in plain English. Multicultural HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C Service (MHAHS), and the Australasian Society for HIV Medicine (ASHM) provide HIV written information in a number of languages for patients.
- Ensure you have **accurate contact details** for your patient. Check that they know they have to **return to collect the test results in person** and organise a follow-up appointment.

HIV/AIDS

A global problem

HIV Pre-test and Post-test Counselling Guide for GPs

A resource for GPs in NSW who see patients who have migrated from or travelled in a country with a high HIV prevalence.

Priority access to the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) is FREE through the

Doctor's Priority Line

www.immi.gov.au/tis/doctor.htm

1300 131 450

Your duty of care includes

- Knowing when to offer an HIV test
- Ensuring you cover pre-test information
- Providing post-test counselling

NSW Health

To view policies on your legal responsibilities, visit www.health.nsw.gov.au

Sexual Health Services

For a full listing of NSW Sexual Health Services check the Business Listings in the White Pages or visit www.acshp.org.au/sexual_health/clinics/

Patient consent is always required for an HIV test.

Post-test counselling

- Ensure the **name, result, date of birth** and **post code** are correct before seeing your patient.
- Have an interpreter if your patient needs or requests one. Call the free TIS **Doctor's Priority Line 1300 131 450**.
- Give the **results in person** and without delay. Your patient will probably be anxious.
- One way to ensure your patient **understands** what you are saying is to ask them to repeat the information back to you.
- **Follow up** patients if they don't attend the appointment.

If the results are negative

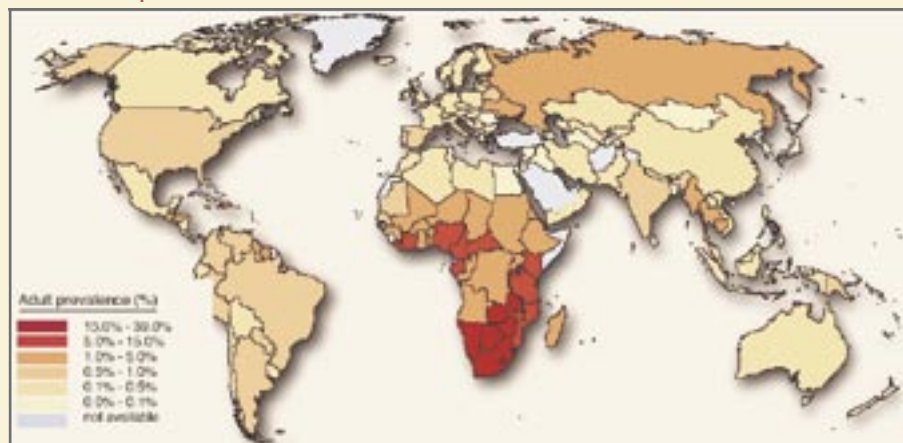
- Check your patient understands how they can **protect themselves** from HIV (e.g. safe sex, safe injecting practices).
- Provide further written information on **HIV prevention** in the patient's preferred language.
- Review the **window period** and the need to retest.

If the results are positive

- Provide **support** and **written information** about living with HIV and possible treatments in the patient's preferred language if possible or in plain English. Contact MHAHS for more information.
- Ask your patient if they have someone they can talk to. Provide advice on where the patient can get **support**. Refer to the NSW HIV/AIDS Information Line, ACON and your local sexual health service.
- Discuss **contact tracing/partner notification** with your patient. You will need your patient's permission to start contact tracing. Contact your local sexual health service or public health unit for specialist advice. Contact ASHM for a copy of the *Australasian Contact Tracing Manual* and AChSHM for clinical guidelines.
- Discuss the patient's **legal obligations**, such as informing all sexual partners of their HIV status, and their rights around **disclosure**. Contact the NSW HIV/AIDS Information Line for more information.
- Discuss **harm-minimisation strategies** such as safe sex and safe injecting practices.
- Explain that positive results go to the **Department of Health**, but are not identified by name.
- Offer and arrange a **follow-up appointment** with you.
- **Refer to a specialist** for counselling and potential treatment. Contact ASHM or your local sexual health service for referrals.

A global view of HIV infection, 2003

WHO - <http://www.who.int/hiv/facts/hiv2003/en/>



Make sure your patient understands:

- How people contract HIV.
- How people protect themselves from HIV.
- When an HIV-positive person has to disclose their status.
- Treatment options in Australia.
- The difference between HIV and AIDS.

GP Information

Australasian Society for HIV Medicine (ASHM)

www.ashm.org.au
(02) 8204 0700

Australasian Chapter of Sexual Health Medicine (AChSHM)

www.acshp.org.au

Sexual Health Services

For a full listing of NSW Sexual Health Services check the Business Listings in the White Pages or visit www.acshp.org.au/sexual_health/clinics/

Patient Information

Multicultural HIV/AIDS & Hepatitis C Service (MHAHS)

for HIV/AIDS information in a number of languages

www.multiculturalhivhepc.net.au
(02) 9515 5030

1800 108 098 (Freecall NSW country)

NSW HIV/AIDS Information Line

(02) 9332 4000

1800 451 600 (outside Sydney)

ACON

www.acon.org.au

(02) 9206 2000

1800 063 060 (outside Sydney)

FPA Health

www.fpahealth.org.au

FPA Healthline: 1300 65 88 86

NSW Health Multicultural Communications

for STI information in a number of languages

www.mhcs.health.nsw.gov.au

(02) 9382 7516



FPA health

Leading the way in reproductive & sexual health

© FPA Health, March 2005
FS - 033 - 2005
This project is funded by NSW Health