

# Routine HIV testing at Guy's and St Thomas'

This leaflet provides information on having a routine HIV test in the Guy's and St Thomas' Emergency Department (A&E). An HIV test is now included if you require a blood test during your visit.



## Why am I being tested for HIV?

HIV is now a long term manageable medical condition and it is important to diagnose this condition as early as possible for the best outcomes on treatment.

Guy's and St Thomas' in line with NICE national best practice, tests all patients who require a blood test and are over 16 years old when they attend the Emergency Department.

We believe this is the safest approach as many people do not realise they have been at risk of HIV infection and symptoms can take many years (sometimes many decades) to develop.

## Will I get my result if the test is negative?

**No** – we will not contact you if your results are negative for HIV infection.

## What happens if my HIV test is positive?

If your routine test is positive (reactive or needs further testing), we will contact you directly and ask you to come to the hospital to repeat the HIV test and confirm your diagnosis. You will be seen by a team of HIV specialists who have many years experience managing people living with HIV.

Testing positive is often a shock but it is much worse for your health to live with HIV that is not being treated. The drug therapy for HIV is extremely safe and effective and allows your body to repair the damage to your immune system.

Sometimes the result is 'equivocal' which means it is neither definitely positive nor negative. In this case we must also see you again to repeat the test.

## What if I don't want to know my HIV status?

Many people do not realise they have been at risk of infection, which is why it is so important for us to test everyone who comes to our Emergency Department. It is always much better to have the HIV test and check if you need life-saving treatment.

However, if you decide you don't want to know your HIV status, please speak to a member of staff who will make sure we cancel your HIV test.

If you are worried about getting a positive result or have further questions, we can arrange for you to see one of our health advisors for a more in-depth discussion. To make an appointment with our health advisors please contact them on **020 7188 3517 or 020 7188 7707** or visit our page on the Trust website: [www.gstt.nhs.uk/our-services/sexual-health](http://www.gstt.nhs.uk/our-services/sexual-health).

## What if my contact details change?

It is important that we have your correct contact details in case we need to speak to you about your test. Please ensure we have recorded the correct contact details, and if they change in the week following your test, let us know by calling 020 7188 2120 so we can update your records.

## Does having an HIV test affect my ability to get life insurance or a mortgage?

**No** - having a negative HIV test has no effect on getting life insurance or a mortgage.

Even in the case of a positive result you should not have difficulty getting personal medical insurance, loans or mortgages. Insurance companies have understood for many years that HIV is a long-term health condition and that people do very well on treatment (with almost normal life expectancies).

## Useful sources of information

### **Terrence Higgins Trust**

Terrence Higgins Trust is the leading and largest HIV and sexual health charity in the UK, able to offer advice and support for sufferers of HIV and their families.

**t:** 0808 802 1221 **e:** [info@tht.org.uk](mailto:info@tht.org.uk)

**w:** [www.tht.org.uk](http://www.tht.org.uk)

### **National Aids Map (NAM)**

NAM provides useful information on HIV and AIDS.

**t:** 020 7837 6988 **e:** [info@nam.org.uk](mailto:info@nam.org.uk)

**w:** [www.aidsmap.com](http://www.aidsmap.com)

## **Contact us**

If you have any questions or concerns about routine HIV testing, please contact our health advisors on 020 7188 3517 or 020 7188 7707 or visit our page on the Trust website [www.gstt.nhs.uk/our-services/sexual-health](http://www.gstt.nhs.uk/our-services/sexual-health)

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [www.gstt.nhs.uk/leaflets](http://www.gstt.nhs.uk/leaflets)

## Further information

### **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

To make comments or raise concerns about the Trust's services, please contact PALS.

**t:** 020 7188 8801 **e:** [pals@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk)

### **Language Support Services**

**t:** 020 7188 8815 **fax:** 020 7188 5953

### **NHS Choices**

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

**w:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

**Leaflet number: 4124/VER1**

Date published: July 2015

Review date: July 2018

© 2015 Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust