

HIV

What is HIV?

HIV stands for the Human Immunodeficiency Virus. HIV is present in body fluids and is most commonly passed on via blood, semen and vaginal fluid.

What does HIV do?

HIV slowly damages the immune system of people who have the virus. This means that their ability to resist and recover from infections is reduced.

How is HIV Transmitted?

Transmission of HIV from one person to another can occur:

- during unsafe sex (i.e. sex where body fluids from one person enters another person);
- when sharing needles, syringes and other injecting equipment; and
- when sharing tattooing and body piercing equipment.

Women can pass the virus to their babies during pregnancy, birth and through breastfeeding.

HIV is NOT spread by coughing, sneezing, sharing eating utensils, shaking hands, hugging or kissing. Safer sexual and injecting practices can reduce transmission of HIV.

HIV Testing

The Sexual Health Service offers an HIV test as part of a routine sexual health screen.

Legally people have a right to HIV pre-test counselling. This provides an opportunity to explore the issues around HIV testing. This leaflet is designed to assist with this.

The HIV Test

When a person is tested for HIV, a sample of blood is taken to check if they have been in contact with HIV. It can take up to 3 months for the test to detect HIV after it first enters the body. This 3 month period is called the 'window period'. Health Care Workers may suggest that you wait before testing to allow for the 'window period' to pass.

The HIV test result will be available about 7 days after the blood is taken and the result must be given in person.

Preparing for the Results

People choose to prepare themselves by:

- returning to the Clinic for your results on a day when they have no other commitments;
- discussing the test with someone trusted; and
- planning what to do if the result is positive and deciding where to go and who to tell.

Talking with a Health Care Worker before testing can help with this.

If the Test Result is Negative

If the test result is negative, this means that HIV was not detected in the blood. This may be because there is no HIV infection or it may be because infection is recent and has

not been detected by the test (remember the 'window period'). The test will need to be repeated if you are in the 'window period'.

If the Test Result is Positive

If the test result is positive, this means the person has been infected with HIV. Infected people will need to take action to prevent infecting others and should see their doctor to discuss regular monitoring of health and immune function and treatment options when the time is right.

People living with HIV can stay healthy for many years. There are medications available to treat HIV infection, however there is currently no cure for HIV.

There are many support services for people living with HIV. We can assist by providing detailed information on, and referral, to these support services.

Notification

The Director of Public Health is informed of all positive HIV test results, however no personal identifying information is given. This information is used only for statistical purposes.

Legal Issues

HIV positive people in Tasmania must not knowingly or recklessly place another person at risk of HIV infection. This is against the law. This means that people living with HIV must tell any sexual or injecting partners about their HIV status prior to sexual or injecting contact.

**Sexual Health Service
Clinical Services**

HOBART

60 Collins Street
Hobart 7000
Ph: (03) 6233 3557

LAUNCESTON

42 Canning Street
Launceston 7250
Ph: (03) 6336 2216

DEVONPORT

23 Steele Street
Devonport 7310
Ph: (03) 6421 7759

BURNIE

11 Jones Street
BURNIE 7320
Ph: (03) 6434 6315

**SEXUAL HEALTH SERVICE
A joint Australian and State
Government Program**

The Royal Hobart Hospital is Tasmania's largest hospital and provides a number of state-wide services including cardiothoracic surgery, neurosurgery, burns management, hyperbaric and diving medicine, neonatal intensive care and high-risk obstetrics. It is the major teaching and research hospital for the State and works closely with the University of Tasmania.

Many students in the health care professions are taught within the Hospital, and gaining skills in examining and interviewing patients is an important part of their education and training. We ask for your co-operation and encourage you to participate in our teaching and research activities. Your permission is required for participation.

The Royal Hobart Hospital encourages feedback from patients, relatives and visitors. This feedback helps staff to better understand the needs of patients and provide the best possible patient care.



**The Royal Hobart Hospital
is a smoke-free site**

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**Information
Pamphlet**

Sexual
Health
SERVICE

HIV