

A Quick Guide to Instant Result HIV Self-Test Kits

Instant result self-test kits for HIV do just what the name suggests: they are kits you can use to test yourself for HIV. They give a result straight away, you can use them wherever you like, and there's no need to involve a doctor or nurse unless you want to.

You can buy self-test kits online, but be careful: only buy kits that you can be sure meet European standards and carry the 'CE' mark. There's no way to be sure other tests are safe or reliable. So far, the only test kit that has this CE quality mark is the BioSure HIV Self Test. You can find out more about it here: www.hivselftest.co.uk

These kits are very accurate if they're used correctly: but it's very important to follow the instructions that come with the kit carefully. Also know that it can take up to three months for HIV to show up in your blood. If you're concerned or confused in any way, talk to your GP, nurse or staff from a sexual health clinic or specialist charity.

There are lots of ways to test for HIV: instant result self-testing is just one. It's quick, convenient and can feel more private, but you might prefer to be tested by a health worker. NHS and community HIV tests are free, confidential and can be anonymous. They also give you the chance to be tested for other sexually transmitted infections at the same time, to talk about any concerns you have and to be referred to other services you might need. Just visit your GP, the Nordhaven Clinic, specialist charity or call NHS Inform.

If you do want to use a self-test kit, have a think beforehand: how you would feel and what would you do if the test shows you might have HIV? Do you have questions or want to talk about it with a health worker first? It's also a good idea to figure out where you could go for a follow-up test or for support.

If your self-test kit result says you have HIV, get it confirmed: go and get tested by your GP or at a clinic to confirm the result if it's positive. This is standard practice for all HIV tests, and will make sure you get the information, care and support you need quickly. There isn't a cure for HIV but treatment is very effective and people can live long and healthy lives.

If you get a negative result, it's likely you don't have HIV: so long as you followed the instructions carefully, you don't need a follow-up test to confirm it. It's a good idea to think about whether you need to be tested for other sexually transmitted infections, though. And remember: test for HIV regularly if you are having unprotected sex, and the best ways to prevent HIV are to use condoms and never share injecting kit.

For more information, testing or support

- NHS Inform
- NHS 24
- Gay Men's Health
- HIV Scotland
- Terrence Higgins Trust Scotland
- Waverley Care
- Nordhaven Clinic

Frequently Asked Questions - Instant Result HIV Self-Test Kits

What are instant result self-test kits for HIV?

An instant result self-testing kit can be used by anyone to test their own blood or saliva sample for HIV. They can be used at home or in any other setting that a person prefers, and the result can be seen straight away. The test doesn't have to be used in a clinic, at your GP or a hospital, and it doesn't need to be sent to a laboratory or involve a healthcare worker in any way.

What's involved in taking an instant result self-test?

The BioSure HIV Self Test, the only instant result HIV self-test kit that has so far been approved for sale in the UK, has four quick, simple steps: getting a single small drop of blood; applying the blood to the test device; operating the test and waiting for the result; and reading the result. For more information, watch the video at www.hivselftest.co.uk

Where can I get an instant result self-test kit?

You should only buy kits that you can be sure meet European standards and carry the 'CE' mark (shown below). There's no way to be sure other tests are safe or reliable.

So far, the only test kit that has this CE mark is the BioSure HIV Self Test. You can find out more about it at: www.hivselftest.co.uk

You can buy a BioSure HIV Self Test over the internet but self-test kits may be made available in other places in the future, such as pharmacies.

How much do instant result self-test kits cost?

The BioSure HIV Self Test costs approximately £29.95 (including postage and packaging).

How reliable are instant result self-tests?

Any kit approved for sale in the UK will meet European standards for accuracy (the number of times it correctly identifies that people do or do not have HIV). These standards mean that any test carrying the CE mark is very accurate. However, people will need to follow the instructions which come with the kit very carefully to get an accurate result.

If the result appears to indicate signs of HIV infection ('HIV positive') it must be confirmed with another test by a health worker. This is standard practice for all 'positive' HIV tests. Tests to confirm results should be done at a clinic or other health care setting, to ensure that if the result is genuinely positive you are linked into appropriate care and support quickly.

The vast majority of people will get accurate results when using self-testing kits. If you have any concerns about accuracy, you may prefer to test at a clinic or other NHS service, please contact a healthcare worker or specialist charity for advice.

Remember: only kits with the CE mark are approved for sale, and have been tested for accuracy. If you use a kit without the CE mark, there is no way to know how accurate it will be.

Is self-testing the right option for me?

Some people may choose to take a self-test because it's quick, doesn't require a trip to a clinic and may feel more private. This convenience could help you to test regularly too.

However, if you have any concerns about self-testing you can go to a clinic where you can be tested by a trained health worker. You can get free, anonymous and confidential access to HIV testing in Scotland through NHS and community services, such as those listed (below). At a testing clinic you could also be tested for other infections, talk about any concerns you may have and be referred to other services that may benefit you. You can ask your doctor for an HIV test, visit your local sexual health service or specialist charity.

Using an instant result self-test kit for HIV may not be the most appropriate option for some people. Before testing by yourself, it's worth thinking about how you would feel and what you would do if the test showed that you might have HIV. You may wish to seek advice and support following a self-test and this will be available in range of places, for example you could contact:

- Your GP
- HIV organisations
- Sexual health clinics
- HIV clinics
- Specialist charity
- NHS Inform

What should I do if I get a negative result?

If you followed the directions for the testing kit very carefully, then a negative result probably means that you do not have HIV. However, after someone is infected with a HIV, it can take up to three months before a test will find it. If you test too soon, or you continue to be at risk of HIV infection, you should test again to make sure you are not infected. If you think you need to re-test, wait the time recommended in the kit instructions (3 months for the BioSure HIV Self Test) and test again. Until you have tested after the recommended time has passed, it is important to avoid any activities that can transmit HIV between people. So it is a good idea to:

- Use a condom when having sex.
- Use a fresh set of sterile equipment if you inject drugs, including spoons, filters and water.

If you get a negative result, you should also consider whether you may have been at risk of other sexually transmitted infections and whether you should get tested for these.

A negative test this time does not mean you will not be infected in the future. You should test regularly if you engage in any activities that could put you at risk of HIV. If you have any concerns, contact your GP or another health worker for advice, information and support.

What should I do if I get a positive result?

A positive result means you may have HIV. If you get a positive result it is very important that you go to a health professional - for example at a specialist clinic or your GP surgery - to have the result confirmed with extra tests. You can arrange this by contacting the services listed below. The specialist clinics provide an anonymous service if you need it. A small blood sample will be taken and sent to a laboratory for HIV testing. If the result is positive, you will be referred to an HIV specialist doctor who may recommend taking HIV drugs to lower the levels of virus in your body.

HIV infection cannot be cured but treatment is very effective and people can live long and healthy lives. Everyone living with HIV in Scotland is offered free treatment, care and support.

For more information, testing or support

NHS contacts:

- **NHS Inform** - www.nhsinform.scot or 0800 22 44 88 (8am-10pm every day)

NHS information service that can help you find a local HIV testing service, as well as information about HIV and sexual health.

- **NHS 24** - www.nhs24.com or call 111

- **Nordhaven Clinic** - 01856 888917

The local Sexual Health Service

Other organisations in Scotland (in alphabetical order):

- **Gay Men's Health** - www.gmh.org.uk, info@gmh.org.uk, 01224 930355 or 0131 5589444

For advice on all matters relating to sex and sexual health for men who have sex with men. This includes HIV and HIV testing, free condoms and lube, information around sexually transmitted infections and in some areas, emotional support including counselling. Provides advice over the phone, digitally or at offices open daily during the week.

- **HIV Scotland** - www.hivscotland.com

HIV Scotland is a policy charity that works to support the interests of people living with or at risk of HIV. Their website has a range of information on HIV and includes a service finder to help you quickly and easily search for HIV testing, support and services near you.

- **Terrence Higgins Trust Scotland** - www.tht.org.uk/scotland, info.scotland@tht.org.uk, 0141 332 3838

Gives help to anyone worried about HIV or sexual health and provides support to people living with HIV from various centres in Scotland. Also runs THT Direct, a free national telephone helpline (0808 802 1221, 10am-8pm, Monday to Friday) that can offer emotional support if you are worried about your sexual health or have concerns about HIV. It can help you access services local to you across the whole of the UK, whether provided by THT or by someone else.

- **Waverley Care** - www.waverleycare.org, info@waverleycare.org or 0131 558 1425

Provides confidential specialist HIV services across Scotland. It can answer your questions and support you whatever the outcome of your HIV test. Support can be anonymous and is available by telephone, email or in person.