

# INFORMED CONSENT – RAPID HIV TEST

HEALTH CENTER #1  
CITY OF PHILADELPHIA • DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

## WHAT IS HIV?

HIV (*Human Immunodeficiency Virus*) is a virus that attacks the immune system. Untreated, it can lead to AIDS, but safe and effective therapies are available that allow people to live long healthy lives without spreading HIV to others.

## WHAT IS THE RAPID HIV TEST?

The rapid HIV test is a test to find out if you have been infected with HIV. It detects antibodies that are proteins the body makes to fight infection. Taking a RAPID TEST means that, in most cases, you will be able to receive your results the same day.

## WHAT DOES A NEGATIVE TEST RESULT MEAN?

A negative test means no antibodies to HIV were found in your blood right now. Sometimes it can take a while for the antibodies to appear after you have been infected. For that reason, if the results of this test are negative, you should get tested again three months from now.

## WHAT DOES A POSITIVE TEST RESULT MEAN?

**If your rapid HIV test result is preliminarily reactive (positive)**, it is likely that you have been infected with HIV. **Your blood sample will be sent for a second test to confirm that you do have HIV.** In a few cases you may be asked to give a second blood sample for this confirmatory test. If you test positive, you will be offered a referral to follow-up medical care even if you have no health insurance. If you are infected with HIV, it does not mean that you have AIDS. If your test result is positive, you can transmit HIV to others by intimate sexual contact, by sharing needles (*through the blood in the needle*) or by organ or blood donation. A pregnant woman can pass HIV to her unborn baby. A breastfeeding mother can pass HIV through breast milk. Transmission can be prevented once you are on the correct medications and your viral load is undetectable.

## OTHER IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW

- Knowing your HIV status may help you and your doctor make decisions about your health that can improve your chances of staying healthy.
- Although anyone can be at risk of infection, certain behaviors make people more at risk, including:
  1. Men who have had unprotected sex with other men.
  2. Past and present users of injectable drugs.
  3. Anyone who received blood or blood products between 1978 and 1985.
  4. Anyone who has had a Sexually Transmitted Disease.
  5. Anyone who has had unprotected sex with people in the above categories.
  6. Anyone who has had unprotected sex with someone who has had other sex partners.
- If your test results are negative, you may develop a false sense of security. **Remember, you could still become infected if you have sex without a condom or share needles.** The test results do not change recommendations to practice safe sex. Also, if you decide not to get tested today, you should still use a condom and not share needles.
- Your HIV test will be done confidentially, as is the case with all clinic tests. A confidential HIV test means that your test result will be placed in your medical record, but the test result will not be released to any outside agency without your written permission. [NOTE: If the result is positive, it will be reported to the local and state health departments as required by law.]

