

## **Rapid HIV Test**

**(Not used for tissue or blood donors)**

### **What is HIV infection?**

HIV means Human Immunodeficiency Virus. HIV is the virus that causes AIDS. HIV hurts your immune system by destroying blood cells in your body that protect you from infections. You can look healthy and still have HIV. The only way to know if you have HIV infection is to take an HIV test.

### **What is a rapid HIV test?**

The Rapid HIV Test is a blood test that looks for antibodies to HIV. It is called the rapid test because the results are usually back within 1 hour. The regular HIV antibody test results usually take 1 to 2 days to come back. Both tests look for antibody to HIV in your blood. Your body makes antibodies to fight all germs, including HIV. After acquiring HIV infection, it usually takes most people about one month to make antibodies to HIV. In rare cases it may take several more months. For children under the age of 2, a positive antibody test could just be from the mother's antibody. In that case, further testing after the Western blot will need to be done.

The rapid HIV test and the regular HIV test are screening tests. Screening tests are quick and easy to do. Both the rapid and regular HIV tests can give positive results even if the person does not have HIV infection. As a result, a person with a positive rapid or regular HIV test must have a second test done to make sure the first test is true. This second test is called a confirmatory test, because it is done to confirm the results of the screening test.

### **How do you confirm HIV infection?**

The test to confirm HIV is called a Western blot. If the Western blot is negative, you do not have HIV infection. If the Western blot is positive, you do have HIV infection. These test results are usually back in 2 to 3 days.

### **How do you get tested for HIV?**

You can have the rapid test for HIV today. Your doctor or nurse will talk with you about the test and identify what the possible test results are. They will also talk about who can find out about the test results. The laws of Wisconsin require that doctors and nurses must get written consent from anyone having an HIV test. If you are 14 years of age or older, you may sign for your own HIV test.

About ½ teaspoon of blood will be taken from a vein in your arm to test for HIV. The rapid test for HIV results is usually ready in about one hour. Enough blood has been taken to do the Western blot test, if needed.

## **How and when will I get test results?**

When your doctor or nurse talks with you about the HIV test, they will make a plan with you, and let you know how you will get the test results. It is important that you understand and are comfortable with this plan. If you have any questions, please be sure to ask them.

## **What do the rapid HIV test results mean?**

### **If the rapid test for HIV result is non-reactive (negative):**

A negative test result usually means you do not have HIV infection. If you participated in risky behaviors within the past 3 months (such as sex without a condom or shared needles), you may want to consider doing another HIV test in 1-2 months. Talk to your nurse or doctor about how and when you should have another HIV test done.

### **If the rapid test for HIV result is invalid:**

An invalid test result does not mean that you have HIV infection; rather it means that the test result was neither positive nor negative. If this occurs, you will need to have the Western blot test to confirm if you have HIV infection.

### **If the rapid test for HIV result is reactive (positive):**

If the rapid test is positive, it might be a false positive test, or it might mean that you have HIV infection. Remember the rapid test is a screening test that gives preliminary results and needs to be confirmed with another blood test. A false positive result can happen. Your nurse or doctor will talk with you about your test results and give you enough time to ask questions. A nurse from the Children's Hospital HIV Program is available to talk with you if you have questions. Check with your nurse or doctor to find out how you can talk to the HIV nurse. For children under the age of 2, a positive antibody test could just be from the mother's antibody. In that case, further testing after the Western blot will need to be done.

If you have HIV infection, regular health care is very important and will help you stay healthy. With regular health care, you can live a very long time with HIV infection.

## **How do you get HIV?**

HIV is spread through contact with the body fluids listed below:

- Blood
- Semen
- Vaginal fluid
- Breast Milk

## How you get HIV (continued)

HIV is spread when blood, semen, vaginal fluid, and/or breast milk from a person with HIV gets into another person's body. This can happen through:

- Sex without a condom. This means oral, anal, or vaginal sex.
- Sharing needles when shooting drugs, getting tattoos, or body piercing.
- Blood transfusions before 1985. Blood products are now tested for HIV.
- Mother to baby before or during birth or after birth through breastfeeding.

HIV is **not spread** through:

- Everyday contact with people at school, work, home or anywhere else.
- Contact with sweat, tears, saliva, or a casual kiss from a person with HIV.
- Contact with dishes, clothes, toilet, or other things used by someone with HIV.
- Eating food prepared by someone with HIV.

**ALERT:** Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

**This teaching sheet is meant to provide you with additional information about your child's care. Diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up should be provided by your health care professional.**