

HIV SELF-TESTING

ENDING HIV IS IN OUR HANDS

Ending HIV transmission by 2020 is possible, but only if gay men test more, treat early and stay safe. To help increase testing rates, the Australian Government amended regulation to allow HIV self-testing (HST) devices to be sold in Australia.

HST devices allow users to perform an initial screening test in the comfort and privacy of their home. It's a very simple process – involving a mouth swab or finger prick – which produces a result in less than 30 minutes.

However, any such device needs to be approved for use in Australia by the Therapeutic Goods Administration and this is yet to occur. This means it's currently illegal to sell HST devices in Australia.

But it is legal to buy HST devices from overseas for personal use in Australia. If you're doing this, there are some issues you need to consider:

USING HST DEVICES FROM OVERSEAS

- As of July 2016, the World Health Organisation reports that 16 countries have HIV self-testing policies. It is important to research a device to ensure that it has been approved by a reputable regulator.
- USAID (the United States Agency for International Development) maintains a list of rapid HIV testing devices approved for use in their programs (usaid.gov).
- Devices vary in terms of their quality and accuracy. They may also suffer from exposure to heat during international shipping which could affect the performance of the test.
- It's unlikely that HST devices purchased from overseas will have Australian-specific information on what to do with your results.
- As these devices are screening tests, the possible results are 'reactive', 'negative' (non-reactive), or 'invalid'. Any reactive result needs to be confirmed by a diagnostic test conducted by a healthcare professional.
- HST devices work by detecting HIV antibodies, which the immune system produces anywhere between 2 weeks to 3 months after exposure to the virus. Because of this window period, HST devices may not provide a conclusive result until up to 3 months after a risk of exposure.
- If you are considering self-testing for HIV, it's important to make sure you know who to contact so you can be linked into care, support and diagnostic testing services. For this reason, we also suggest that people not test alone and test at times when relevant support services are operating.



Participants from ACON 2014 Mardi Gras Parade Float

NEED TO TALK?

If you want to talk to someone about a positive or reactive result, call:

- ACON: (02) 9206 2000
Free Call: 1800 063 060 | TTY: (02) 9283 2088
We provide an HIV Diagnosis Priority Service between Monday and Friday. When you call, tell us that you're newly diagnosed or testing for HIV and would like to speak with one of our counsellors or health promotion officers. You'll get a call back within one working day of your initial call.
- NSW Sexual Health Infoline:
1800 451 624 | TTY 02 9221 6515
- QLife: 1800 184 527
- If you want to talk to someone outside of business hours (9am – 6pm), then pls call Lifeline's 24 hour crisis counselling service: 13 11 14

If you've had a recent risk event, you can take PEP to prevent infection, but only if it's taken with 72 hours of exposure to HIV. Call the PEP Hotline on: 1800 737 669.

OTHER TESTING OPTIONS

Gay men have several HIV testing options:

- Free rapid HIV tests are provided at a[TEST] as part of a comprehensive HIV and sexual health testing at sites on Oxford St, Surry Hills, Newtown and Kings Cross. Find out more at: www.atest.org.au
- Standard laboratory testing is available through most GPs and at all sexual health services. Find out more at: www.endinghiv.org.au/test-more



WHAT IS ACON DOING ON THIS ISSUE?

As well as taking this step to inform our communities, we're working with our partner organisations to advocate for better and faster approval processes.