

VA HIV Testing Information for Health Care Providers



Why is HIV testing so important?

- ▶ Early diagnosis of HIV is associated with greatly improved medical outcomes. In addition, a patient's knowledge of their HIV status may substantially reduce their risk of transmitting the virus.
- ▶ VA is the largest single provider of HIV care in the United States, providing care to more than 31,000 Veterans with HIV in 2020. Yet, only 44 percent of Veterans in VA care have been tested for HIV. Many Veterans assume that they have already been tested.
- ▶ Our goal is to diagnose HIV infection as early as possible so that Veterans can receive care for their HIV and remain healthy for many years to come. Testing is a key component of the Ending the HIV Epidemic Initiative.

What is VA's policy on HIV testing?

- ▶ VA HIV testing for patients is voluntary.
- ▶ Veterans must be given the opportunity to ask questions. After all questions have been answered, verbal consent should be obtained. VA does not require written consent, documentation of consent, or scripted pre-/post-test counseling. If a Veteran declines, the provider should politely ask the the rationale for declining the test and note this in the Veteran's chart.
- ▶ Under Public Law 115-182 (the MISSION Act), HIV-related information may be disclosed without written authorization from the Veteran to a non-Department entity for purposes of providing health care, including hospital care, medical services, and extended care services, to patients or performing other health care-related activities or functions.
- ▶ Negative test results may be sent via regular mail. In person notification is recommended for positive test results after confirmation testing.

Which patients should be tested for HIV? How often?

- ▶ In line with current CDC recommendations, VA supports HIV testing as part of routine medical care for all Veterans. Routine medical care should include a sexual history for every patient no matter their age. Any patient without documentation of an HIV test result in their health record should be offered a test.
- ▶ We encourage all Veterans to get tested at least once.
- ▶ Patients documented to be HIV negative but who have ongoing risk factors should be offered an HIV test at least annually. Patients at risk should be considered for Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP). Learn more at www.hiv.va.gov.

Whose responsibility is it to test patients for HIV?

- ▶ VA encourages all providers (especially those in primary care, mental health, and substance use clinics) to routinely offer HIV testing to all of their patients.
- ▶ All positive tests should be confirmed before patient notification.

Where can I find more information?

www.hiv.va.gov

www.cdc.gov/hiv/testing/index.html



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
HIV, Hepatitis, & Related Conditions Programs