

HIV screening

/ I'm getting tested /

Québec 

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# WHAT IS HIV?

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HIV, or human immunodeficiency virus, is transmitted sexually and through blood. It weakens the body's immune system and allows other diseases to develop. If it isn't treated, over time HIV infection can lead to AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome). But today, with available treatments, people living with HIV can live better and longer.

**/ IN QUÉBEC, ABOUT  
TWO PEOPLE ARE NEWLY  
INFECTED WITH HIV EVERY  
DAY. /**

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# WHY SHOULD YOU GET TESTED?

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- / You are in a stable relationship and you want to stop using condoms.
- / You are pregnant or are considering becoming pregnant.
- / You recently had a sexually transmitted or blood-borne infection
- / Your current partner or one of your previous partners has an HIV infection.
- / You or your partner have taken risks: you've had unprotected sexual relations, shared used needles, used contaminated equipment, been exposed to contaminated fluids or you've had several sex partners.
- / You or your partner have taken risks and you are in one of the following groups:
  - / *Gay or bisexual men;*
  - / *People who inject or inhale (sniff) drugs;*
  - / *Current or past inmates;*
  - / *Sex workers;*
  - / *People from a region or country where HIV is very common.*

If you think you have been infected with HIV, get tested so you can take care of your health quickly and avoid spreading the infection to other people.

If you engage in risky behaviours repeatedly, get tested often, such as every three or six months.

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# WHERE CAN YOU GET TESTED?

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Call Info-Santé at 8-1-1 to find the screening health centre nearest to you or talk to a health professional.

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## HIV TESTING

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HIV testing is confidential. Some health centres also offer anonymous testing, which means you are not asked for any personal information. The test is usually free.

HIV can be detected a few weeks after getting infected; however, it can take up to three months.

### STANDARD TEST

- / Blood is drawn from a vein.
- / Results are given about three weeks later during a second appointment.
- / The test can detect HIV early in the course of infection.

## RAPID TEST

- / A few drops of blood are taken from the fingertip.
- / Results are available in a few minutes.
- / The test doesn't always detect recent infections.
- / The test is available only in some places.

The rapid test used in Québec is 99% reliable and has been approved by Health Canada. If the result is **positive**, further tests will be done on a blood sample taken from a vein.

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## POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE RESULT...

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No matter what your result is, a health professional will offer you information and support, depending on your needs. You can also get help from your health centre or a community group.

A negative result doesn't mean that you can't get HIV. The only way to avoid getting infected is to adopt safe practices, especially for sexual relations and drug use.

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# NOTIFYING PARTNERS

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If you are infected with HIV, your sex partners or people with whom you use drugs should also be notified so they can get tested quickly. This allows them to have access to medical care and avoid serious complications, and prevents infection transmission. The doctor or nurse can help you with this process.

## DID YOU KNOW THAT...

- / Several people infected with HIV don't know it.
- / When first infected with HIV, a majority of people may develop fever, fatigue and muscle aches, but they don't think about seeing a doctor because these symptoms also resemble those of the flu.

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## HOW DOES HIV SPREAD?

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Mostly through

- / sexual relations (vaginal, anal and oral);
- / sharing of sex toys;
- / sharing of drug preparation, injection or inhalation equipment;
- / contaminated tattooing and piercing equipment; or
- / from a mother to her baby during pregnancy, labour or breastfeeding.

Having a sexually transmitted infection (e.g. herpes, syphilis, chlamydia or gonorrhoea) increases the risk of acquiring or transmitting HIV.

## INFORMATION

### **/ Info-Santé 8-1-1**

or talk to a health professional (e.g. nurse, doctor or pharmacist)

### **/ Coalition des organismes communautaires québécois de lutte contre le sida (COCQ-SIDA)**

514-844-2477

1-866 535-0481 (toll free)

[www.cocqsida.com](http://www.cocqsida.com)

### **/ Portail VIH/sida Québec**

514-523-4536

1-877-767-8245 (toll free)

[info@pvsq.org](mailto:info@pvsq.org)

Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux

[sante.gouv.qc.ca](http://sante.gouv.qc.ca) (general public)

[itss.gouv.qc.ca](http://itss.gouv.qc.ca) (youth)

**Santé  
et Services sociaux**

**Québec**

