

Self-testing for HIV

Self-testing (also known as home testing) kits for HIV are now available in Australia. These self-testing kits complement the HIV testing that is widely available through GP and sexual health clinics throughout Australia.

The option to self-test for HIV at home or in another comfortable location increases access to HIV testing for people that may feel uncomfortable initially going to a clinic.

This flyer provides answers to some of the concerns that you may have about using a self-test kit for HIV.



What is a HIV Self-Test Kit?

A HIV self-testing kit can be purchased by anyone online. Some people might feel a lot more comfortable to use the self-test as it offers complete privacy at a place of their choice. Not needing to talk to anyone about their circumstances and experience is an added benefit.



Which HIV self-testing kit is approved in Australia?

The Atomo HIV Self-Test is Australia's only approved HIV self-test. It is:

- Relatively simple: it comes with instructions on how to do the test step by step
- Quick: it takes 15 minutes to give you a result.

The following link provides more information about the HIV self-testing kit and how to order one: <https://atomohivtest.com/home.php>



What do you need to know before purchasing a HIV self-test kit?

Before you decide to purchase a self-testing kit, consider the following options:

1. No matter what the result of the self-test is, the person who has taken it is encouraged to have a follow up standard HIV blood test done at a clinic to confirm the result. So they can be sure of their HIV status.
2. Creating a supportive environment can be most beneficial. This might mean different things for different people. You might choose to tell a supportive friend that you are going for a test, or ask a friend to do the test with you. You might also seek further information and support from any of the services mentioned in this flyer.
3. People who are applying for a permanent residency visa while here in Australia will be required to undergo a standard HIV blood test at some stage of the process. Immigration agents strongly encourage potential applicants to know their HIV status before they submit their applications. This is because the agent will be able to better advise of the options they may have.
4. The Rapido – rapid HIV testing clinic in Adelaide is a free service. Rapido offers a welcoming testing experience for gay men, men who have sex with men, and trans and gender diverse people. The people doing the rapid testing are not Doctors or Nurses; they are specially trained peer testers who are bound by the same confidentiality rules as healthcare professionals. With this simple finger-prick test, you will find out your result in just 20 minutes. You will also have the option to see a Nurse who can provide you with a full sexually transmissible infection and blood-borne virus screening. For contact details, see the 'Where can you go for HIV testing?' section of this flyer.



When doing a HIV self-test, what are the possible results?

It is essential to know about the possible test results and what to do about it.

The three possible results are:

No clear result: (unable to conclude the result is negative or positive)

This can happen if the procedure was not done as per the manufacturer's recommendation, for example. In this case, consider attending a health clinic for a standard HIV test.

Negative result: (no HIV is detected)

When the test result is negative, you need to consider the following:

- The testing window period: If you were exposed to HIV by having sex or intravenous drug use over the last three months, this test might not capture it, and you need to have a retest in 3 months. Therefore, knowing when the risk occurred is important.
- The reason that prompted you to do the test: Was the reason related to one potential exposure to HIV or ongoing exposure? There is pre and post-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP and PEP) medication to prevent HIV transmission.
 - a. Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) can prevent HIV up to 81% of the time when started within 72 hours of having unprotected sex – the sooner the better. Please see <https://www.getpep.info/get-pep-now/sa/>.
 - b. Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) is 99% effective in preventing HIV with ongoing or more frequent potential HIV exposures. Travellers can take PrEP for the period they travel, and it is called "Holiday PrEP": <https://getprepd.org.au/>.

If you require any further information to help you understand the different treatment options that prevent HIV transmission, please contact any of the services listed on this flyer.

Positive result: (HIV has been detected)

A positive test result may indeed be positive, but it also has a chance of being a false positive.

The most important thing that you need to do after reading a positive result is to arrange a standard HIV blood test at a clinic to confirm the result as soon as possible. Confirming the result will allow you to access the very effective treatments that are available in Australia. Your sexual partners may also be eligible for PEP or PrEP. With HIV treatments, the virus can be suppressed so people can lead a long and healthy life and not pass it on to others.

HIV testing can be arranged by visiting:

- a GP clinic
- the Rapido clinic – for more information see: www.shinesa.org.au/health-services/rapido
- the Adelaide Sexual Health Centre – call (08) 7117 2800 to make an appointment or for more details see www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/adelaidesexualhealthcentre
- a SHINE SA clinic – call (08) 8300 5300 to make an appointment <https://www.shinesa.org.au/find-clinic/>.

Where can you go for HIV testing?



Where can I get
more information
and support?

PEACE Multicultural Services offers information, emotional and practical support services to all people who come from diverse backgrounds. Services are provided by trained staff who have high respect for people's unique experiences and circumstances. They can engage with people regardless of country of birth, language, religion, age, gender, sexuality or visa status.

PEACE takes the issue of privacy and confidentiality very seriously and works with people to support their choices in life.

Contact PEACE Multicultural Services on **(08) 8245 8100** and ask to speak to a PEACE worker or contact a counsellor directly on **(08) 8245 8110** or email askpeace@rasa.org.au.

SAMESH specialises in community-based support, education and training about sexual health and HIV for men who have sex with men and people living with HIV, as well as the broader LGBTIQ community.

Contact SAMESH on **(08) 7099 5300** and ask to speak to a SAMESH worker, visit their website samesh.org.au or email enquiries@samesh.org.au.

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