

Why knowing your HIV status is good for your health and wellbeing

[Blog](#), [Health](#), [HIV](#), [Sexual Health](#)

For different reasons, many sexually active people don't want to know whether they are HIV positive or not. They don't want to even think about it. But if you do know what your status is, one way or the other, you will be making a positive difference to your life. Here's why...

Do you know your HIV status? According to the [World Health Organisation](#) (WHO), over half a million people in Europe don't know they are living with human immunodeficiency virus or HIV. Many of them are still afraid to get tested because of fear of prejudice and discrimination against people living with HIV and AIDS. LGBTI people who are HIV positive often face a 'double stigma', including within their own communities.

But a better quality of life for people living with HIV and AIDS depends on testing. Only after knowing their status, can HIV positive people start a treatment, and obtain support and social protection. In advance of World AIDS Day, we have joined the [European Testing Week](#) to encourage people to get tested on HIV and hepatitis. Although there is no cure for HIV yet, treatments can enable a greater life expectancy and prevent the transmission of the virus to others.

Testing is the first step to greater life expectancy for people living with HIV. As the virus attacks the immune system, a person with HIV is at risk of developing serious infections. The ability to fight other diseases like cancer weakens too. But if you know you are HIV positive, and access treatment, you can help prevent the development of other infections and increase your ability to fight disease.

Testing and following treatment also limits the risk of passing the virus to someone else. **Today, there is scientific evidence proving that undetectable equals untransmittable (U = U).** This means that people living with HIV who achieve an undetectable amount of HIV in the blood by taking antiretroviral therapy cannot sexually transmit the virus to others. Therefore, testing is not only important for your own health and wellbeing, but also for others.

How HIV tests work?

The most common form of HIV test is a blood test and today it can provide an accurate status within a month of infection. The blood is tested several times before someone is given a positive result. In some countries, saliva tests and dried blood tests are also available; these tests provide a rapid accurate result, but are a bit less able to detect very recent infections. Voluntarism, privacy and confidentiality should be assured and respected while getting tested.

How is HIV transmitted?

- HIV is transmitted through contact with blood, sexual fluids and breast milk
- The main routes of transmission are through unprotected sex and by sharing injecting equipment

Where to get tested?

[EuroTest](#) has put together a list of places where you can access a HIV test:

- Sexual health clinics, also called genitourinary medicine (GUM) clinics
- Hospitals, department of infectious diseases
- Clinics or testing sites run by community based HIV/hepatitis organisations or charities
- Some General Practitioner (GP) surgeries and GPs
- Some contraception and young people's clinics
- Local drugs agencies
- Antenatal clinics, if you are pregnant
- Private clinics

[Check out the NAM European test finder to find a testing centre near you.](#)

Help moving forward, if you test positive

If you have tested positive for HIV you may feel overwhelmed at the moment, and that's okay. Solid communities and organisations' networks across the world are there to support you whenever you need so. To seek treatment and care, EuroTest recommends these websites:

- <http://www.aidsmap.com/>
- <http://www.worldhepatitisalliance.org/>
- <http://www.infohep.org/>