ORAQUICK®

HIV Self-Testing

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Caribbean Med Labs Foundation
The Regional Champion for Best Practice in Medical Laboratory Services

1 What is HIV Self-Testing?

An HIV Self-Test is a process that allows you to test yourself in privacy and at your convenience.

- HIV Self-Tests use either oral fluid (from your mouth) or blood.
- For this pilot project, we will be using a test that requires oral fluid.

✓ *Convenient and private.*

✓ *Rapid result in 20 minutes.*

2 Since the test uses oral fluid, does this mean I can get HIV from kissing?

- No. HIV Self-Tests measure antibodies to HIV – NOT the virus itself.
- You cannot get HIV from kissing. Evidence shows that HIV is spread through exchange of bodily fluids such as blood, semen and vaginal fluids, NOT saliva.

3 Why should I do an HIV Self-Test?

An HIV Self-Test allows you to:

- be in control by following simple steps
- test in private
- test at your convenience
- easily read and understand the test result
- have an alternative to testing in health care settings

4 Would I have to do everything on my own?

- No. HIV Self-Testing can either be Directly Assisted or Unassisted. You have the power to choose.
- Whether you choose Assisted or Unassisted Self-Testing, the Provider will supply you with your own package of full information, in addition to the Test Kit.
- The package will include printed materials and information on links to informative videos to help you with the process.

5 How good is the test?

- HIV Self-Tests approved by the World Health Organisation are highly specific and sensitive. They can give you very reliable results and tell whether you may be infected or are NOT infected if used as instructed.
- As with other HIV antibody tests, a single reactive (positive) result, is NOT diagnostic. So it requires confirmation in the health care system to determine if the result is truly positive.
- Inconclusive or uncertain test results also require further testing in a health care facility.

6 Can anybody take the HIV Self-Test?

- The test is not for people previously diagnosed with HIV who are on treatment as they may get a false negative result.
- The test is for anyone who wants to know if they are HIV negative or HIV positive.
- HIV ST provides an opportunity for referrals for other services including testing and treatment for Sexually Transmitted Infections and for other sexual health services.

7 What happens if I test negative?

- You will receive counselling to help you stay negative.
- You will be given information on prevention services that are available to you.
- You should repeat the test in three months if you think you might have been recently exposed to HIV, or if you have high ongoing risk.
- The three month interval is called the Window Period because it can take as long as three months after you've become infected for your body to develop antibodies.

8 What happens if I test positive?

- Your result will be kept confidential.
- You will receive professional counselling on what it means to be HIV positive.
- You will be referred for further testing to confirm the results.
- If confirmed as truly HIV positive, you will be referred for care and treatment to prevent illness and to help you live as normal a life as possible.

9 Can I be forced to take the test?

- No. You have the right to refuse to take the HIV Self-Test.
- You have the right to have everything explained to you before consenting to take the test.

10 How does the country benefit from HIV Self-Testing?

- This addition to traditional testing services has been ongoing in other regions of the world for many years now. Some countries report that HIV Self-Testing has been able to identify twice as many infections compared with standard testing services.
- HIV Self-Testing is coming to the Caribbean at a very convenient time when the COVID-19 pandemic has caused disruptions to many services generally.
- HIV Self-Testing reduces restrictions to access while at the same time providing opportunities for the country to expand HIV testing services.

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