

Routine testing for HIV is important because it can help to detect the virus at an early stage, when it is most treatable, and can help to prevent the transmission of HIV to others. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate there are approximately 1.3 million people living with HIV in the United States. This represents about 0.4% of the overall population. Approximately 14% of these individuals are unaware that they are HIV-positive. As a result of these missed or delayed diagnoses, a significant proportion of people living with HIV may not be receiving appropriate treatment or taking steps to prevent transmission such as using condoms and taking medication to suppress the virus. The CDC recommends that everyone between the ages of 13 and 64 get tested for HIV at least once as part of routine healthcare. More frequent testing is also recommended for people who are at higher risk of HIV infection, such as those who have multiple sexual partners, inject drugs, have unprotected sex, or are men who have sex with men (MSM).

A person's HIV risk is often defined by their individual behaviors and sexual network, e.g. having sex without a condom, with multiple partners, or with people who have multiple partners. However, geography and structural factors can also influence a person's risk. More than 50% of new HIV infections occur in five states and are concentrated within certain geographic hotspots within these states. Several of these hotspots are located in Florida, the state with the fifth highest rate of new HIV infections in the US.

In 2019, the United States government launched the "Ending the HIV Epidemic (EHE)" initiative with the goal of reducing the number of new HIV infections in the country by 90% by 2030. The first phase of the initiative focuses on areas disproportionately impacted by HIV and includes four strategies: diagnose, treat, prevent, and respond. These foci align with the key strategies developed by the Florida Department of Health to eliminate new HIV transmissions in the state. Both initiatives place a strong emphasis on routine HIV testing in healthcare settings.

In Florida, laws have been enacted to make it easier for individuals to get tested for HIV. Adolescents aged 13 years old or older do not need parental consent to have an HIV test. Additionally, in healthcare settings, written informed consent is not required for HIV testing if the patient has been notified beforehand (section 381.004, Florida Statutes). Any authorized facility, including hospitals, urgent care clinics, substance abuse treatment centers, primary care clinics, community clinics, blood banks, mobile medical clinics, and correctional healthcare facilities can test patients for HIV once notification has occurred, unless they explicitly opt-out.

By widely implementing the CDC's recommendations for HIV testing, we can increase the number of people who know their HIV status and facilitate early detection of the virus. Increasing testing will also increase opportunities to introduce HIV prevention methods, such as pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), to those who test negative but are at risk for HIV. These actions are crucial in the effort to end the HIV epidemic in the US.

Viral suppression is associated with early detection of HIV, prompt linkage to HIV care, and the initiation of antiretroviral treatment (ART). Taking ART as prescribed can lower the amount of virus in a person's body (viral load –HIV RNA) to a level that is undetectable by most lab tests, typically less than 200 copies/mL. People who have achieved viral suppression or who are "undetectable" are unable to transmit HIV to others and experience fewer negative health outcomes related to HIV. Overall, routine testing for HIV is important for the health and well-being of both the individual being tested and the community as a whole. Routine HIV testing can also help to reduce stigma by normalizing the practice of testing and promoting the idea that HIV testing is a routine and important part of healthcare for everyone. This can help to reduce the fear and discrimination that often surrounds HIV and encourage more people to get tested.

The process of initiating PrEP must begin with HIV testing. If the test result is negative, it is important to assess the individual's suitability and interest in available HIV prevention strategies like PrEP. This involves having a candid conversation about sexual practices and other risk factors. For those at increased risk of HIV, developing a risk reduction plan is recommended. Such a plan may include regular HIV and STI testing, condom use, and PrEP.

Novel methods of delivering healthcare remotely, including HIV testing and PrEP, have emerged and become normalized due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Individuals are able to receive At-Home HIV tests by mail and to complete PrEP visits via telehealth and mail-in specimen collection kits. These methods can be utilized by clients at their convenience and should be encouraged by providers.

At-home HIV tests can be self-administered by patients and are often covered or reimbursed by payors. The Florida Department of Health offers free at-home testing kits to residents of the state through the website <https://knowyourhivstatus.com/get-a-free-home-testing-kit/>. Health providers are encouraged to provide support and follow-up resources for those who are receiving at-home testing.

Clients can also contact their local health department for information on how to request kits as well as HIV counseling and prevention services.



UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI
**MILLER SCHOOL
of MEDICINE**



Florida HIV Testing Law Basics

Prevention counseling is not required prior to HIV testing in healthcare settings. The client must be informed that HIV testing is planned and given the option to decline the test. This notification can be provided verbally or through written materials and may be included in a general consent to medical treatment. If the client chooses to decline the HIV test, this decision should be documented, and providers are encouraged to address the reasons for the decline. Minors who are 13 years of age or older do not need parental consent to receive an HIV test.

Why should you conduct routine HIV Testing?

Current testing laws allow healthcare providers to save time by eliminating the need for obtaining written consent, conducting prevention counseling, and conducting HIV risk assessments. Rapid HIV tests are accurate, affordable, and noninvasive, making them a practical option for testing. These tests can also be incorporated into routine health care visits. While HIV counseling and risk assessment are not required, they can generate revenue for providers as they are billable services during office visits. Under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), Medicare, Medicaid, and private insurance are required to cover or incentivize services with an "A" or "B" rating from the US Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF). HIV screening has an "A" rating and should therefore be covered by these types of health plans. However, it is important to check with each individual health plan to confirm reimbursement coverage for HIV testing services.

Who should be tested for HIV?

The CDC recommends that everyone between the ages of 13 and 64 is tested for HIV at least once in their lifetime. This recommendation is similar to screening guidelines for other treatable conditions. However, the frequency of testing should increase with level of risk. For those at higher or ongoing risk for HIV, testing should be repeated at least annually. More frequent testing may be indicated for some individuals at highest risk.

Patients who have increased or ongoing risk for HIV include:

- Sexual partners of people living with HIV
- Those starting a new sexual relationship
- Those with recent sexually transmitted infections
- Those with multiple sexual partners
- Those who report inconsistent condom use

It is important to remember that although there is no cure, HIV is a manageable infection. Current medicines are extremely effective and help people live longer healthier lives.

What is PrEP and Where is it Available?

PrEP is a preventive measure for individuals who are at high risk of contracting HIV but do not currently have the virus. It involves taking medication to significantly reduce the chances of acquiring HIV. When taken as directed, PrEP can reduce the risk of HIV infection by over 99%. It is important for individuals at increased risk of HIV to discuss the use of PrEP in combination with HIV testing, testing for STIs, and condom use with their healthcare provider after receiving a negative HIV test result.

There are currently three medications that have been approved by the FDA for use as PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis): Truvada and Descovy, which are both single tablet combinations of two antiretroviral medications (tenofovir and emtricitabine), as well as a generic version. However, Descovy is not approved for use by individuals who have receptive vaginal sex. Cabotegravir-LA, an injectable PrEP medication, was approved by the FDA for use by sexually active men, women, and people of trans experience. This medication is given as a bimonthly intramuscular injection. To receive PrEP, individuals must undergo testing for HIV, sexually transmitted infections, and viral hepatitis, and some formulations also require monitoring of serum creatinine. PrEP can be obtained through various healthcare settings, including primary care offices, sexually transmitted infection clinics, family planning clinics, and other locations.

Who should take PrEP?

CDC guidelines suggest that PrEP be discussed with individuals who are HIV-negative and are at an increased risk of infection from sex or injection drug use. Federal guidelines recommend that PrEP is considered for people who are HIV negative and who are:

- Sexual partners of people living with HIV
- Engaging in sex with multiple sexual partners
- Recent diagnosis of bacterial STI (gonorrhea, chlamydia, or syphilis)
- Exchanging sex for drugs money or other items
- Using condoms inconsistently
- Injection drug users who share injection equipment or have sexual risk for HIV

Our program is designed to increase information and provide resources to Florida providers regarding HIV prevention. For more information regarding our services and for testing & PrEP resources for your practice, please contact us at 305-243-2584 or ETI@med.miami.edu



UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI
MILLER SCHOOL
OF MEDICINE

Resources are listed below for additional information regarding implementation of HIV testing in health care settings, PrEP programs, linkage to HIV care, and billing and reimbursement for HIV testing and prevention.

Resources: 1. Florida Department of Health's resource for HIV testing and prevention. <https://www.testmiami.org/> 2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Revised recommendations for HIV testing of adults, adolescents, and pregnant women in health-care settings. MMWR. September 2006;55(RR-14): 1-17. <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5514a1.htm> 3. U.S. Preventive Services Task Force. Screening for HIV- Current Recommendations. 2019 <https://uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/uspstf/recommendation/human-immunodeficiency-virus-hiv-infection-screening> 4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. PREEXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS FOR THE PREVENTION OF HIV INFECTION IN THE UNITED STATES - 2021 UPDATE <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/pdf/risk/prep/cdc-hiv-prep-guidelines-2021.pdf> 5. University of Miami. A Provider's Guide to Reimbursement and sustainability for routine HIV Testing and HIV prevention in Florida healthcare facilities. 2020 http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/aids/prevention/_documents/um-eti/um-provider-guidance.pdf 6. World Health Organization. Dr Gottfried Hirsnschall. Striving for zero discrimination in health care. March 2016. <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/commentaries/zero-discrimination-day/en/> 7. 2-1-1 Big Bend. Florida HIV/AIDS Hotline. <http://www.211bigbend.org/flhivaids hotline>. 8. Health Resources and Services Administration. Get HIV Care and Treatment. <https://hab.hrsa.gov/get-care/get-hiv-care> Accessed December 2021 9. Florida Department of Health. AIDS Prevention. <http://www.floridahealth.gov/%5C/diseases-es-and-conditions/aids/prevention/index.html> 10. Florida Department of Health. PrEP Plan of Action Toolkit. http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/aids/prevention/_documents/PrEP-toolkit.pdf Updated March 2016. 11. Gilead Sciences, Inc. Why DESCOVY FOR PrEP® (pre-exposure prophylaxis)? <https://www.descovyhcp.com/about-descovy-for-prep/> 12. Florida Department of Health. Testing and Counseling. <http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/aids/prevention/testing-counseling.html> 13. Health Resources and Services Administration. Test and Treat: A New Paradigm for Slowing the Spread of HIV. https://hab.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/hab/Publications/careactionnewsletter/hab_test_and_treat_january_careaction_.pdf