HIV Serology

A blood test for HIV is used to tell you if you have the virus that causes AIDS. This is the human immunodeficiency causing virus responsible for AIDS. After exposure to the HIV virus it can take up to a year to test positive for the virus. The test becomes positive after the exposed persons body begins producing antibodies to the virus. You can still pass the virus to others during this time even if you have a negative test for HIV, and should therefore take all necessary precautions to prevent spreading the virus to others.

TESTING FOR AIDS

An *ELISA* (enzyme-linked immunoabsorbent assay) is a blood test available to let you know if you have contracted the virus which produces AIDS. If this test is positive, it is usually repeated. If positive a second time, a second test known as the Western blot test is performed. If the Western blot test is positive, it means the person has been infected with HIV. A positive test does not mean you have developed AIDS but it does mean you can spread HIV to other people. **Use protection if you are sexually active. Inform your sexual partner that you are carrying the AIDS producing virus.** A negative test means you are not producing antibodies to HIV at this time. You may still be capable of transmitting HIV and should be retested if you have been exposed to the HIV virus.

PREVENTION OF AIDS

- **The best way to prevent AIDS is to avoid high risk behavior.**
- The success in treating AIDS is good. Millions of research dollars are being spent on creating a vaccine to prevent the disease as well as providing a cure. New drugs have been helpful at fighting the disease.
- Your caregiver will inform you of the most effective and current treatments.

Call for your results as instructed by your caregiver. Remember it is **your responsibility** to obtain the results of your blood test. *Do not assume everything is fine if you have not heard from your caregiver.*

Remember! A negative test following exposure does not mean you have not acquired the virus. Follow up with more testing is necessary! Early *diagnosis* (learning what is wrong) leads to earlier treatment and improved outcomes.

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