

Testing Together

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is Testing Together?

Testing Together provides an opportunity for you and your partner to be tested for HIV and receive your test results together, with a trained provider present to help you talk about the results and link you with follow-up services. Being tested and receiving your results together can start a conversation between you and your partner about HIV, and can help you talk openly about how to keep you and your relationship healthy. Getting an HIV test can be intimidating, if not downright scary—and telling your partner the results can be even more difficult. Testing Together can help address this difficulty.

Are you telling me that my partner and I will learn our results at the same time?

Yes. One of the key benefits of Testing Together is that you and your partner will receive your HIV test results at the same time, in the presence of a trained HIV testing provider. The provider will help facilitate difficult discussions that can sometimes occur when talking about HIV, and will help you develop a plan for your future, based on both of your test results.

We don't consider ourselves a 'couple,' we're just having sex. Should we receive Testing Together?

Yes. Testing Together services are available to any two or more persons who self-identify as having a sexual relationship, regardless of whether you call yourselves a 'couple.' Relationships take many different forms, and you and your partner have to decide together if Testing Together is right for you. Keep in mind that information discussed during a Testing Together session is personal for you both, and you will benefit most if you're able to be open and honest with your partner.

My partner and I have only been together for one month. Can we receive Testing Together?

Yes. Some couples may decide to receive Testing Together before they have sex or when they've only been together for a few weeks. Longer-term couples will benefit too. It does not matter if you and your partner have decided to have sex only with each other, or if you have been having sex outside this relationship.

What if I have cheated on my partner? Will I have to talk about that in the session?

No. During a Testing Together session, the HIV testing provider will not ask you about your past risk behavior or past sex partners. He or she will maintain a focus on the present and the future, and will give you the opportunity to revisit your agreement about sex with outside partners to ensure you and your partner are keeping each other safe in the future.

My partner and I are monogamous. Do we need to get tested together?

For some high-risk groups, most HIV transmissions occur from a primary sex partner. It is possible that you and/or your partner have HIV and don't know it. Testing Together is important for learning your HIV status and your partner's HIV status, so that you know for certain.

I'm HIV-positive, but I haven't told my partner. Can we receive Testing Together services?

Yes. Testing Together can provide an opportunity for you to share your HIV status with your partner in a controlled setting with a trained provider. The provider can help start a healthy discussion between you and your partner about how to manage the realities of HIV in your relationship.

Will my partner break up with me if I'm positive and he's negative (or vice versa)?

There is no way to know what direction your relationship will take once you both know your HIV status, but in Africa, where the service was started, most couples with different results stay together. Relationships develop differently. Knowing your status and your partner's status will open the door for honesty, dialogue, and trust – the foundations of any strong relationship.

Will the counselor ask about my other sex partners in front of my partner?

No. Unlike individual HIV testing that you may have had in the past, Testing Together doesn't focus on specific past risk behavior or past sex partners. Instead, Testing Together focuses on helping you and your partner learn your HIV status today, and hopefully develop a plan to address HIV in your relationship in the future.

How long does a Testing Together session take?

The entire session takes approximately 45 minutes, depending on the length of your post-test counseling session.

What is the process for receiving Testing Together?

Typically, you and your partner will talk to the receptionist about Testing Together services, and will receive some paperwork to fill out. If you are determined to be eligible for the service and you both agree to be tested together, then you will meet with a provider for a discussion about the testing process. Then you will both be tested for HIV. While the test is processing, the HIV testing provider will facilitate a discussion about how HIV impacts your relationship, your HIV risk concerns as a couple, and your agreements about sex outside the relationship. When the test results are ready, the provider will deliver them to both of you at the same time, in the same room. The provider will then work with you to determine your next steps for keeping one another safe and healthy, and will make any necessary linkages to follow-up services for you and your partner.

I would like to participate, but I'm not sure my partner will want to. What can I do to get my partner interested?

Have a discussion with your partner about the benefits of testing for HIV together. You can learn more information on www.effectiveinterventions.org, or on the Emory University website www.testingtogether.org.

Will you share our information with others outside of our relationship?

The rules around confidentiality are the same for all HIV testing – whether you test separately or together. Your information will be held confidentially, and your HIV status will be kept between you and your partner. Only you and your partner can decide together whether to tell other people about your HIV test results. If one of you tests positive, the HIV testing provider will arrange for a confirmatory test. If the confirmatory test is positive, that result will be reported to the State Health Department – the same as it would in ANY place that does confidential HIV testing.