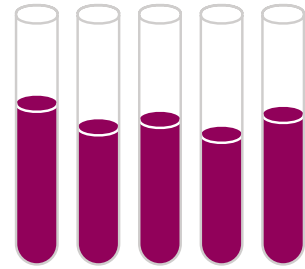


HIV Testing & Reporting in Nova Scotia

Information for people who want to be tested for HIV



In Nova Scotia there are two types of HIV testing: anonymous and confidential. Confidential testing can be nominal or non-nominal. Read on to learn more about HIV testing and the reporting of HIV test results.



You can be tested at an anonymous test clinic

Anonymous testing means getting a test for HIV (the virus that causes AIDS) without giving your name. All you have to do is call an anonymous testing clinic for an appointment using a first name. At no time will you be asked for your full name, and **your name will not be recorded or reported.**

Anonymous testing is available only at anonymous testing clinics. Contact your local Public Health office or community-based AIDS organization to get the phone number of the nearest clinic.



You can be tested by your health care provider

If you choose to get an HIV test from your health care provider, you can choose to have either nominal or non-nominal testing.

Nominal testing

Nominal testing means that your name will be used on the form that is sent to the laboratory with your blood sample. Your name will also be used on the test result when the lab sends it back to your health care provider. If the test result is positive, the lab and your health care provider will report it to the Medical Officer of Health using your name.

Non-nominal testing

Non-nominal testing means that a number code developed by your health care provider will be used on the form that is sent to the laboratory with your blood sample. This code will be used on the test result when the lab sends it back to your health care provider. If the test result is positive, the lab and your health care provider will also report it to the Medical Officer of Health, using the code. Only you and your health care provider will be able to link your name with the code used. The result may be recorded in your medical file by your health care provider.

There are a few cases where your health care provider must, by law, report your name to the Medical Officer of Health. See the section on “Reasons for nominal reporting.”

Your name and medical insurance number will not be used when you have non-nominal testing.

It is important to use the same code number if you are tested again for HIV. Your lab report will show only the following information about you:

- code number
- health care provider's name
- date of birth
- gender
- the county in which you live

If you test positive for HIV, the above information will be reported to the Department of Health and Wellness, as well as:

- the risk factor that might have caused HIV infection
- information about whether or not you have donated or received blood products or body tissues (such as a body organ, like a kidney)

In some circumstances, your health care provider will be required by law to report your name even if you had your test done non-nominally. This is called nominal reporting.

Reasons for nominal reporting

The law requires nominal reporting only under the following circumstances:

- A person who donated blood, semen, or body tissue since 1977 is found to be HIV positive.
- A person who is HIV positive presents a risk to others. This is most likely to occur if the person is unaware of being HIV positive because the health care provider was unable to locate him or her to give the test result. The health care provider may ask the Department of Health and Wellness for help in locating the person.

A health care provider may consider nominal reporting under the following circumstances:

- A health care provider knows that an HIV-positive patient has a partner who is at significant risk of getting HIV and the patient refuses to tell the partner or allow anyone else to do so.
- A health care provider has urged a patient who is HIV positive to tell a partner who is at risk, but believes the patient will not do so.

You may choose nominal reporting if you wish to use the services of public health nurses. For example, you may choose to give your name to the Medical Officer of Health or a public health nurse if you would like someone else to notify partners so that your identity will not be revealed to them. This could happen because:

- You do not feel you can answer all the questions that your partners may have, or you do not feel emotionally prepared to notify your partner.
- Your health care provider cannot help you contact your partners.

Your HIV test results are never given to others without your consent. If someone else notifies your partners, they cannot give your name.

This information is strictly confidential.

If you are HIV positive ...

If you are HIV positive, any sexual partners or people with whom you shared needles are at risk of getting HIV.

Knowing that HIV is spread through exposure to blood, semen, or vaginal fluids will help you decide who else may be at risk. Activities that involve the greatest risk include sharing needles while using drugs and having anal or vaginal sex without using a condom.

If you are unsure if the type of contact you have had with someone could put him or her at risk, talk to your health care provider or a public health nurse. There may be an AIDS support group in your community that can help you.

It's important to tell your partners

Your partners need to know that they may have been exposed to HIV. Then they can get counselling and decide whether to have HIV testing.

Telling partners that you have HIV may be very difficult for you. You may not be ready to deal with their reactions when you need support yourself. Perhaps you do not want certain partners to know that you are HIV positive. Your health care provider can help you decide on the best way to notify your partners. You may:

- contact your partners personally
- ask your health care provider to help you notify your partners
- request that a public health nurse help you to notify your partners

Your HIV test results are never given to others without your consent. If someone else notifies your partners, they cannot give your name. This information is strictly confidential.

HIV +



Public Health Offices:

Amherst	902-667-3319 or 1-800-767-3319
Antigonish	902-867-4500, ext. 4800
Bridgewater	902-543-0850
Dartmouth	902-481-5800
New Glasgow	902-752-5151
Sydney	902-563-2400
Truro	902-893-5820
Wolfville	902-542-6310
Yarmouth	902-742-7141



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