



Questions and Answers (VCT)

Q. What is VCT?

A. VCT stands for voluntary counseling and testing, in relation to HIV/AIDS.

Q. What is an HIV test?

A. You can have an HIV test with a simple blood test. A sample of your blood is taken for this. Testing can be done at VCT clinics, which will also provide pre- and post-test counseling, regardless of the result. Most hospitals also offer HIV testing. Because stigma can be a large barrier for becoming tested, it is possible to receive an HIV test in another community.

Q. What is anonymous testing?

A. An anonymous test means that no one except you, the one who took the test, will know the results, and also only you will know that you even took the test. Results of anonymous tests are not even submitted to larger health authorities, in most cases. Usually, a number will be assigned to you so that you do not have to use your name.

Q. What tests will show my name?

A. These tests are called nominal tests, however before taking the test you can ask a few quick questions to find out: (1) Do you have to submit your name? (2) Will the result be recorded in any personal or public records?

Q. What happens when I go for a test?

A. In most cases, there will be pre-test counseling. This will be a private conversation allowing you to ask questions about the test. Most testing centers will require that you offer your consent, showing that you have made the choice to be tested. A small sample of blood is taken and tested (testing may be done quickly on the spot or sent to a lab, depending on the resources). The first test checks for anti-bodies, a reaction your body has against HIV, and a negative test will mean you do not carry HIV. If the test is positive, the clinic will do a second test to confirm the results. There will be post-test counseling as well, for both results.

Q. What did they mean about window period?

A. When someone is exposed to HIV, and becomes infected with the virus, there is a delay in which the virus will be detected in the blood. For example, if someone is infected with HIV and the next day is tested the anti-body test will show negative. The window period is a definition for the time period that is required for tests to show the infection as positive. The window period lasts from between two weeks to three months. Counselors may mention that if someone has recently been involved in risky behavior that they ought to be tested again in the future, the window period in the reason for this.