

## How do HIV tests work?

It can take 3 to 12 weeks (21-84 days) for an HIV-positive person's body to make enough antibodies for an antibody test to detect HIV infection. This is called the window period. Approximately 97% of people will develop detectable antibodies during this window period. If you get a negative HIV antibody test result during the window period, you should be re-tested 3 months after your possible exposure to HIV.

- With a **rapid antibody screening test**, results are ready in 30 minutes or less.
- The **OraQuick HIV Test**, which involves taking an oral swab, provides fast results. You have to swab your mouth for an oral fluid sample and use a kit to test it. Results are available in 20 minutes. The manufacturer provides confidential counseling and referral to follow-up testing sites. Because the level of antibody in oral fluid is lower than it is in blood, blood tests find infection sooner after exposure than oral fluid tests. These tests are available for purchase in stores and online. They may be used at home, or they may be used for testing in some community and clinic testing programs.

If you use any type of antibody test and have a positive result, you will need to take a follow-up test to confirm your results. If your first test is a rapid home test and it's positive, you will be sent to a health care provider to get follow-up testing. If your first test is done in a testing lab and it's positive, the lab will conduct the follow-up testing, usually on the same blood sample as the first test.