

Six signs it's time to get tested for HIV

Many people who have sex do not get tested for HIV or other STDs. The CDC recommends opt-out HIV screening for anyone age 13-64 along with yearly routine check-ups. Despite recommendations, many individuals refuse to get tested or only get tested based on their perceived risk factors.

Those who are sexually active should get tested at least once a year. If you engage in *risky* sexual behavior, you should consider getting tested every 3-6 months.

Here are six signs it is time to get an HIV test:

1. You are sexually active.

If you are sexually active, you are instantly at risk of contracting an STD. It is important to remember that any form of sexual intercourse (oral, anal, or vaginal) leads to risks of getting an STD whether it is your first time or fifth time having sex. When you begin having sex, it is recommended that you begin getting tested regularly.



2. You are having unprotected sex.

Unprotected sex significantly increases your chances of contracting HIV or an STD. Remember that the use of condoms during sexual intercourse (oral, anal or vaginal) will decrease your likelihood of getting infected with STDS or HIV. If you have had unprotected sex at any point during your sexual history, there

is a chance that you may have been exposed to HIV/STDs.



Credit: Getty Images

3. You have had a previous STD infection.

Previous exposure to STDs such as gonorrhea, Chlamydia, syphilis and other STDs places you at greater risk of contracting HIV. If you have previously had an STD and continue to have sex, consider regular testing throughout each year.



4. You engage in risky sexual behavior.

Risky sexual behavior includes having multiple sex partners, anonymous sex partners, having sex with a

paid sex worker, or having sex while under the influence of alcohol or drugs. You are also at risk if you have shared needles, syringes, or other injection equipment with an individual who injects drugs. If you have engaged in any of the behaviors above, it is a good idea to seek out a testing facility to learn your status and to get the necessary help if needed.



5. You are unaware of partner's sexual history.

Whether you have been dating your partner for 2 years or a couple of months, if you have never spoken about each other's sexual history you may be placing yourself at risk. It is important to sit down and have a talk with your partner, or anyone you choose to have sex with to learn about their history and to tell them about yours. It may even decide to go get tested together.



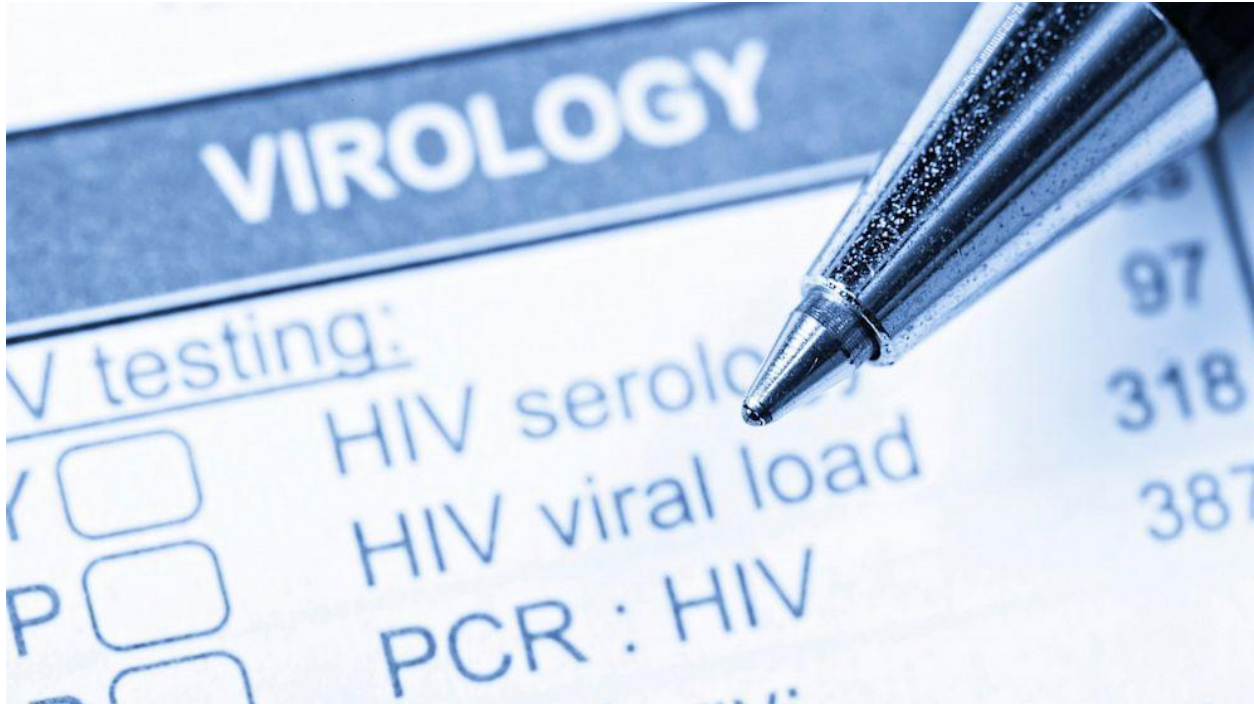
Credit: Getty Images

6. You

have had sex with someone who is HIV

positive.

If you know you may have been exposed to HIV due to having sex with someone who is HIV positive, go ahead and get tested. If you get tested early enough, chances are you will have a better outcome by starting treatment earlier than months down the line.



Any of the above behaviors places you at risk for HIV. Testing may be scary to consider, but ignoring the problem will not make it go away. Frequent and early testing will benefit you in the end. According to the CDC, knowing your status will give you piece of mind and allow you to make informed decisions. By receiving treatment early, you have a greater chance of improving your health, prolonging your life and lowering the chance of spreading HIV to others.