

# SESSION 15: Should I be tested for HIV?

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## Objectives

1. Participants will know what the HIV antibody test is and what it means to have either positive or negative results.
2. Participants will understand the relationship between the test and getting AIDS.
3. Participants will learn about the advantages and disadvantages of taking the HIV antibody test.
4. Participants will review facts sheets on local services and costs for HIV testing and AIDS treatment services.
5. Participants will consider what they would feel and do if found to have a positive HIV status and list all resources that would be necessary.
6. Participants will recognize that deciding to be tested is a major decision which needs careful consideration, and that if they think they want to be tested, they must individually go talk to a counselor.

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## Rationale

Whether or not to be tested for HIV is not a simple question for anyone - particularly if the results are positive. There are issues of confidentiality, exclusions, prejudice, loss of job and service possibilities, and access to treatment considerations. The dilemma is even greater for runaway youth because of their vulnerability, lack of support systems, lack of money and resources, juvenile status, tendencies to act in an antisocial fashion, and high risk of suicide.

It is assumed, however, that these adolescents need to learn how to cope with this decision. In addition to providing information, personalizing the consequences of HIV testing, examining advantages and disadvantages, problem solving is employed to assist these teenagers to make an informed and wise choice in this matter.

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## Procedures

1. Introduce the day's topic and also indicate what each person is good at doing. Review homework around dysfunctional thoughts. Check on Feeling Thermometer readings and successes.
2. Present the facts on the HIV antibody test through two teams making up questions based on fact sheets.
3. Using practice cards explore what the results of the test mean.
4. Consider the advantages and disadvantages through two scenes with scripts.

5. Review local resources for testing and treatment.
6. Using pairs interviewing each other personalize the issue of testing's consequences by asking what each person would do if they found out they were HIV-positive.
7. Have the group help a member decide on the testing issue by employing problem solving.
8. Close with Feeling Thermometer readings, appreciations and homework on checking out a place that provides testing and counseling.

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## **Materials**

Tokens

Newsprint and marking pens

Feeling Thermometers

HIV Antibody Test Fact Sheets

Test Result Practice Cards

Jenny and Counselor script

Edward and Counselor script

List of Advantages and Disadvantages

List of Local Resources

"If I were positive" Interview Format

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## ***Exercise 1: Introducing and reviewing***

### ***Leader says***

I'm glad to see you back to today's session of "Stay Safe!"

That was some visit we had last time with \_\_\_\_\_ the person with AIDS.

It makes a difference getting to know somebody who actually has AIDS.

We can see that it is what a person does that leads to AIDS and not what kind of a person she or he is.

Obviously people get AIDS without even being aware that they are taking risks.

That's why you need to be acutely aware of your risks and how to deal with them.

For homework, you were to answer three questions: 1) what did you expect a person with AIDS to be like? 2) how have you treated people with AIDS that you met? and 3) were any of your fears unrealistic?

How did you answer these questions?

**Obtain answers and discuss. Give out tokens for responding and pass out tokens for group members to use.**

In "Stay Safe!" one of the main goals is to help you cope with all the different things which contribute to your being involved with unsafe sexual behavior.

Today we will be trying to decide if we should get tested for HIV.

By the way, would each of you hold up the condom that you carry with you at all times?

**Have each person hold up a condom that they have been carrying with them. Give tokens to those group members that produce them.**

You see, we don't want you to get HIV.

If you already are HIV-positive, we don't want you to make it worse for yourself by getting re-infected.

We want to slow the spread of HIV and AIDS in ourselves, our friends and the community.

Also we want you to know your goals and to reach the goals you have set.

Each one of you has plans for the future.

**Ask a few group members where they want to be in 3 years. Give tokens.**

I am convinced that you will make things better for yourselves.

By being here at Stay Safe you have already started.

Let's go around and introduce ourselves.

Tell your name and tell us something you are really good at.

Just say "I'm Fernando, and I'm good at basketball."

I'll start. I'm \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm good at \_\_\_\_\_.

**Have everyone give their name and what they are good at.**

That was great.

How are you feeling right now on the Feeling Thermometer?

**Encourage responding and pass out tokens for participation.**

Remember how important it is to stay in touch with how much discomfort you are feeling and to label correctly what those feelings are.

At the end of Session 13 I asked you to catch yourself making a self-defeating thought, stop it, argue against it, and substitute a self-supporting thought.

Give me examples of what you did on your homework.

**Encourage sharing homework examples. Give out tokens.**

What did you do since we last met to stay safe or to make life better for yourself?

I'm interested in anything you did no matter how important or unimportant it might seem to you.

Every step you take leads you to staying healthy so you can live the kind of life you want.

So what did you do?

**Encourage sharing and give out tokens. Catch someone doing something good.**

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## **Exercise 2: What are the facts about the HIV test?**

Ever since these sessions began we have talked a lot about HIV - the human - that's where the "H" comes from - immunodeficiency - that's where the "I" comes from - virus - that's where the "V" comes from.

The human immunodeficiency virus.

We have talked about preventing ourselves from getting it and what happens if we get it.

We have talked about being positive or negative.

Once it was mentioned that there was a test which could tell you if you had the virus.

So a logical question is, "Should I get tested?"

We want you to work on answering that question today.

We will start with some basic facts about the test.

You will be in two groups.

I will give you a fact sheet on the HIV antibody test.

Each group will make up two questions about the test and then see if the other group can answer them.

**Divide the group into two smaller groups and pass out the HIV Antibody Test Fact Sheet.**

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## **Hiv Antibody Test Fact Sheet**

### **Background**

1. The HIV antibody test detects antibodies in your blood.
2. Antibodies are made by your blood when something from outside, like HIV, enters it.
3. Antibodies usually protect you.
4. Even though there are antibodies in your blood, they are not effective in stopping HIV.

## The test

1. To take the test a small sample of blood is drawn from your arm.
2. There is a delay from when you become infected with HIV until the antibodies are made.
3. The HIV antibody test predicts about as well as other widely used tests.
4. Some people who test negative (no antibodies in the blood) are actually positive.
5. Most people who test positive (antibodies were found in the blood) are really positive.
6. To be sure about the results, the test should be taken several times with a wait of six months in between each testing.
7. The HIV antibody test does not detect whether you have aids.
8. The test only tells you if your body has produced antibodies in response to the virus that causes AIDS.
9. There is a delay of years in many cases between getting infected with HIV and showing signs of AIDS
10. The HIV antibody test can be used to tell if a newborn baby had received HIV from its mother's blood before birth.
11. The test can be taken confidentially (the results are secret) or anonymously (no one knows you took it).

The overall idea of the test is this: When HIV enters the body, the body produces antibodies in response to the virus.

The test detects the presence of these antibodies in your blood.

Later we will get into what it means if you get positive or negative results, but for now let's focus on the test.

Go ahead now and think of two questions about the test that you want to ask the other group.

***Allow five minutes for the groups to come with two questions to test the other groups' understanding of the HIV antibody test.***

We will go with one question for each group, and then switch to the second question.

***Have the groups ask their questions, obtain an answer from the other group, and then discuss them.***

Those were some good questions and answers.

***Give out tokens.***

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### ***Exercise 3: What do the test results mean?***

So now you have some idea about what the test does and doesn't do.

But what does it mean if you get positive results or negative results?

I know there are a lot of wrong answers to these questions.

So we will try and clear up the incorrect ideas through using our practice cards.

Because you have probably heard so many wrong answers from friends and all kinds of people, I don't expect you to know the right answer.

So take your best guess.

This is a safe place - there's no penalty for incorrect answers.

Take a risk and guess.

I'll give you a card; you pass it as the cards says; the person who gets it asks you a questions and you try to answer it?

Then the person turns over the card and reads what is on the back.

Let me give you an example.

My card says, "Pass to the person who is good at teaching" so I pass it to that person.

That person reads the card, "If your test results are negative, does that guarantee that you are free of the virus?"

Well, I'm going to take a guess. "No, I don't think negative results are a guarantee."

The person who asked me the question turns over the back and reads a suggested answer: "You may have taken the test before your body had a chance to make antibodies."

Has everybody got the idea?

***Pass out the cards one at a time. After the first person answers, go onto the next person.***

## **The HIV Test Results Cards**

**1,Front,HIV,S15**

**Pass to the person who is good at listening to others**

**Does being HIV-positive mean that you now have AIDS?**

**1,Back**

**Possible answer:** No. It means that I have been exposed to the virus and have been infected with HIV.

2,Front,HIV,S15

Pass to the person who is good at asking questions

Does being HIV-positive mean that you will definitely develop AIDS in the future?

2,Back

**Possible answer:** Some people remain healthy for long periods of time. Some people develop a condition with some of the signs of aids but not all of them.

3,Front,HIV,S15

Pass to the person who is good at solving problems

If you are HIV-positive, how long might it take to develop full-blown AIDS?

3,Back

**Possible answer:** Anywhere from a few months to more than ten years after infection.

4,Front,HIV,S15

Pass to the person who is good at fixing things

If you are HIV-positive and have antibodies in your blood, you are not immune to the virus. Is that a true statement?

4,Back

**Possible answer:** Yes, that is a true statement. Even if I have HIV antibodies in my blood, the antibodies do not kill the virus.

5,Front, HIV, S15

Pass to the person who is good at answering questions

If you are HIV-positive, should a second test be performed?

5,Back

**Possible answer:** Yes. A second test is needed to confirm the findings of the first one. Mistakes can be made, and some medicines like birth control pills can produce a wrong result.

6,Front,HIV,S15

Pass to the person who is good at gossiping

Does being HIV-positive mean that you can no longer have sex?

6,Back

**Possible answer:** You can have sex but make sure you always practice safer sex.

7,Front,HIV,S15

Pass to the person who is good at analyzing things

If you are HIV-negative, does it mean that you are free of the virus?

7,Back

**Possible answer:** No. You would need to have another test six months to a year later.

8,Front,HIV,S15

Pass to the person who is good at expressing feelings

If you tested HIV-negative, why might you still have the virus?

8,Back

**Possible answer:** Because it can take the body anywhere from six weeks to a year after being infected to make antibodies. If you take the test after being infected, but before the body had enough time to produce antibodies, you will test negative.

9,Front,HIV,S15

Pass to the person who is good at getting others to cooperate with them

If you have been exposed to the virus but tested negative, can you pass the virus to someone else?

9,Back

**Possible answer:** Yes. You need periodic testing to know if you are completely free of the virus.

10,Front,HIV,S15

Pass to the person who is good at finding bargains

If you shoot up with drugs and have tested HIV-negative, is it all right to share needles?

10,Back

**Possible answer:** No. You could still get infected from the needles and you can still pass the virus on if the test was taken before the body had time to make antibodies.

That was great!

**Give out tokens.**

Are there any other questions that you have or points that you are confused about?

**Elicit questions. Try to answer them with the group's help. Get answers for next time, if you do not know them now.**

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### **Exercise 4: Advantages and disadvantages for testing**

We've learned about the HIV Antibody test and what either positive or negative results mean.

But if you plan to answer the question, "Should I get tested?" you need to know about the advantages and disadvantages.

This little blackout will get us started.

Who will play Jenny and who will play the counselor?

**Select volunteers, give them their scripts, and have them act the roles.**

#### Jenny and the Counselor

JENNY: I think I want to take the AIDS test.

COUNSELOR: The HIV test doesn't tell you if you got AIDS. It just tells you if you are infected with the virus -HIV.

JENNY: I know all that.

COUNSELOR: So why do you want the test?

JENNY: Well, I haven't always been so good at protecting myself. Maybe if I get some bad news, I'll do better.

COUNSELOR: It can shake people up and change their behavior.

JENNY: I heard someplace that if you are positive you can take some drugs that will slow the virus

down and strengthen your body. They may keep you from getting AIDS so soon.

COUNSELOR: Well, there are some experimental therapies that seem to do that, but they haven't really been tried out on kids. Are those the main reasons you want the test?

JENNY: I guess so.

COUNSELOR: There's nothing else? I keep getting the feeling that you may have something else on your mind.

JENNY: One more thing.

COUNSELOR: What's that?

JENNY: Me and my boy friend want to have a baby. But he say's we got to find out if we got AIDS first. Cause he isn't having no baby with AIDS.

COUNSELOR: That's a pretty good reason.

THE END

Wonderful job!

***Remember the tokens.***

What are some advantages that came up?

***Encourage responses. Possible answers: behavior change, get new therapies as soon as possible, decide about having a baby.***

Let's illustrate some other points.

Who will play Edward and who will play the counselor?

***Select volunteers, give them the scripts, and have them start playing the roles.***

Edward and the Counselor

COUNSELOR: OK, Edward. You want the HIV test. We talked about what if it comes out negative. Now what if it comes out positive?

EDWARD: I could get early treatment.

COUNSELOR: That would require your parents approval and they would have to pay for it.

EDWARD: Are you kidding? I don't even know where my parents are. Besides they hate me and I hate them. They wouldn't sign anything for me or do anything for me and I wouldn't ask them. I'll take care of it myself.

COUNSELOR: How will you do that?

EDWARD: I'll go the Welfare Office.

COUNSELOR: You better be careful who you tell if you are HIV-positive. You tell a welfare case worker

that and you won't be able to get services from group homes, shelters and a whole lot of other places.

EDWARD: I'll get a job.

COUNSELOR: If people know you are positive, you may not be getting jobs either.

EDWARD: If I got AIDS and I'm really sick, who cares about a job. I'll just get care.

COUNSELOR: Where? Not many places serve kids. The money? Who pays for it? Most treatments haven't been tried on kids. We don't know if they work. Who will come to where you are living and take care of you?

EDWARD: I don't know. It sounds terrible. If I found out I was positive, maybe I'd just kill myself.

THE END

Another great performance!

Some of the disadvantages were brought out there.

What are they?

***Encourage answers and discussion. Possible answers: conflict with parents, confidentiality, excluded from services, discrimination, costs, lack of services, unproven treatment, despair leading to suicide.***

Here is a list of advantages and disadvantages of getting tested.

The list takes what you said and adds some more.

***Pass out the list and go over it briefly.***

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## ***Advantages and Disadvantages of Getting Tested***

### **Advantages**

1. Begin new therapies as soon as possible.
2. Keep from bringing an AIDS baby into the world.
3. Keep from passing the virus to your friends and partners.

### **Disadvantages**

1. Person with positive status may feel depressed and do self-destructive things.
2. Person with negative status may develop a false sense of security.
3. Positive people may develop a sense of helplessness.

4. Person with positive status may face discrimination.
5. People with positive status may be excluded from jobs and services.
6. Someone may not keep the status a secret and blab it around.
7. Can't get insurance if have HIV-positive status.
8. Treatments may not help.
9. Can't pay for it.
10. Teenager may not be able to comply with the treatment requirements.
11. There may not be adequate follow-up and support.
12. A person with positive status may become so angry that he or she takes it out on others by spreading HIV around.

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### ***Exercise 5: Local resources***

I just want to take a minute to pass out to you two sheets.

One tells you where you can get tested locally and what the costs and procedures are.

The other tells you where adolescents can be treated here in this community and what the costs and procedures are.

***Pass out information on local resources and very briefly explain them.***

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### ***Exercise 6: What if I were HIV-positive?***

Let's bring this a little closer to home.

I want you to interview each, so you can find out how you would react if you were HIV-positive.

You need to consider becoming prepared.

Where will there be a place you can get AZT - a medicine that can help you?

Where can you get all kinds of treatment?

Who will take care of you?

***Divide the group into pairs.***

This brief interview form tells you the questions to ask your partner.

Decide who will be interviewed first, and, when the first person is finished, let the other person be interviewed.

Here is the interview form. As soon as you get it, begin the interview.

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## ***HIV-Positive Interview Form***

1. If your results were positive, how would you feel?
2. If your results were positive, what would you do?
3. Who would you tell (parents, brothers and sisters, friends, others) and what would their reactions be?
4. Who would take care of you if you were sick?
5. Who would provide you with a place to stay and food?
6. Where would you get medicine and treatment?
7. Who would pay for treatment?
8. If you had to give yourself a shot of medicine four times a day for a year, would you keep it up?

***Allow five minutes per person to be interviewed.***

So how do you feel now?

***Obtain feeling thermometer readings and discuss.***

What was your reaction to the interview?

***Discuss.***

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## ***Exercise 7: Should I get tested?***

Now we need to answer the question about getting tested.

Who will play Pedro?

***Select a volunteer.***

Pedro has lived on the streets for a year.

He has had unprotected sex with both males and females.

He feels all right physically, but he has heard so much about HIV and AIDS that he is worried.

In fact, he is scared.

He doesn't like being sick.

Pedro doesn't want to die.

Pedro wonders if he should get tested for HIV.

What is your goal, Pedro?

***Help Pedro to state a one sentence goal: to stay alive and healthy.***

Now I want the rest of you to use problem solving to help Pedro decide what he should do about getting tested.

Remember in problem solving you need to describe the problem, find out what is important to Pedro, set a goal, list a number of ways he can reach his goal, evaluate those alternatives, choose one and figure out what he has to do to put the alternative into effect.

So go ahead and help Pedro.

***Encourage the group to use problem solving to help Pedro. Coach them as necessary. Give out tokens.***

That was very good.

We are at the end of our session.

How do you all feel?

***Take feeling thermometer readings.***

You deserve a lot of credit for today's work.

Let's tell each other what we appreciate about each others' contributions.

***Encourage giving strokes.***

For homework, find a place that specializes in HIV testing for adolescents and go talk to a counselor there about it.

Find out what it costs and what kind of counseling do they provide before and after the results come in.

How long will they continue to help a person who was tested there?

I will see you again on \_\_\_\_\_ (date) at \_\_\_\_\_ (time).

**END OF SESSION 15**