

## I TOOK THE TEST

*"I was worried – I prefer to know where I stand, even if it's bad news."*

*"You don't get sick for some years after getting HIV, especially if you have care and support – but if you don't know you're infected, you can't do anything about it."*

*"My family is the most important thing in my life – if I know my status I can protect them better."*

*"I took some risks when I was younger – I needed to know if this would affect my health."*

*"My employer offers treatment for employees and their families – I took the test so I could get treated if I needed to."*

*"I was afraid that people might find out but the testing was very confidential and reassuring."*

*"I lost two brothers to HIV and AIDS. We found out about their status when it was too late."*



**you GOTTA know**

('Know your status' campaign logo in Brazil)

Find out more about how to develop and implement workplace policies and programmes. Contact:

The ILO Programme on HIV/AIDS  
and the World of Work

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Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS  
**UNAIDS**  
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# KNOW YOUR STATUS



International  
Labour  
Office  
Geneva

**HIV** testing and  
counselling:  
the gateway to  
wellness



## WHY TAKE THE TEST?

Most people with HIV don't know it. There aren't symptoms. It doesn't show. But HIV leads to sickness later – that's what we know as AIDS.

A test has two big benefits – you can be sure and you can take control:

- *if you are negative, you can protect yourself and those you're close to*
- *if you are positive, you can get access to care and support (increasingly this includes treatment) and learn ways to keep yourself healthy.*

The test isn't an end but a beginning – it gives you the knowledge you need to live positively and responsibly, with or without HIV.

## WHAT IS THE TEST?

HIV tests use small samples of blood, urine or saliva to look for antibodies to the virus. The type of test available varies in different countries, and the result may take some weeks, but it's increasingly common to find 'rapid tests' that give you the result in less than an hour.

## KEY PRINCIPLES OF TESTING

### It Should Be VOLUNTARY

*"HIV screening should not be required of job applicants or persons in employment", ILO Code of Practice*

### CONFIDENTIAL

*"Personal data relating to a person's HIV status should be bound by rules of confidentiality", ILO Code of Practice*

accompanied by **COUNSELLING** (pre- and post-test) to explain in detail how the test works, what a positive or a negative result means for you, and above all to tell you what services are available to help – whether your main need is care and the protection of your sexual partner (because you have HIV) or prevention (because you don't).

The ILO Code of Practice recommends testing outside the workplace, in order to protect confidentiality. In any case the key principles of the Code stress:

*"HIV infection is not a cause for termination of employment"*

*"There should be no discrimination against workers on the grounds of real or perceived HIV status".*

## BEFORE YOU TAKE THE TEST

Think carefully. Ask questions. Know what services are – and are not – available for care, treatment and support, in the community and at your workplace.

Finding out your status can be a life-changing experience. The pre-test counselling gives you the opportunity to think through the changes that might follow, especially if the result is positive. If you're too worried, of course you don't have to go ahead with the test.

## WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

## IF THE RESULT IS NEGATIVE

The counsellor will help you understand how you can stay negative.

You will be given information on how to assess your own HIV risk and the ways to prevent infection, and told about groups in the community and sources of information and education.

*The National AIDS Council or Commission, and the UNAIDS and WHO offices, as well as some NGOs, can provide information and refer you to local services.*

Your workplace may be one that benefits from an HIV/AIDS policy and programme, including education for prevention - if not, why not ask for a meeting between management and workforce representatives to discuss starting one?

*The ILO Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and the world of work is a blueprint for workplace action, and you can get more information from the local ILO office, the employers' or workers' organization in your country, and ILO/AIDS.*

## IF THE RESULT IS POSITIVE

The counsellor will explain the differences between HIV and AIDS, how you can look after yourself, and what services are available for care, support and treatment. You may not get sick or need any treatment for several years.

*You can get advice about healthy living from the national and international AIDS organizations in your country, or from WHO/UNAIDS/ILO headquarters. This will include advice on nutrition, rest, and how to avoid infections such as TB that are more easily contracted by people with HIV.*

Antiretroviral drugs (ARVs) don't kill the virus but they control it so that someone with HIV can go on living a full and active life.

ARVs aren't yet available everywhere at affordable prices. The 3 by 5 Campaign is trying to get treatment to three million people by the end of 2005. The ILO supports the campaign by encouraging confidential voluntary counselling and testing through workplace campaigns, and helping occupational health services deliver ARVs.

*"Where health services exist at the workplace these should offer, in cooperation with government and other stakeholders, the broadest range of services possible to prevent and manage HIV/AIDS and assist workers living with HIV/AIDS." ILO Code of Practice*

Many people living with HIV/AIDS say that what helps the most is the emotional support and friendship of those around them – family, friends, neighbours and colleagues. There's no danger of HIV infection from casual contact so we all have the responsibility to extend care and acceptance to those affected.

The workplace offers many opportunities to oppose discrimination and fight stigma through policies, programmes and education. It can also be an example to the wider community.

*"Solidarity, care and support ... should guide a workplace in responding to HIV/AIDS." ILO Code of Practice*