

On 28 November 2018, the first HIV self-testing device (the Atomo HIV Self Test) was approved for sale in Australia for the first time. The HIV self-test is expected to be available for sale in late March 2019.

WHO SHOULD BE TESTING FOR HIV?

HIV testing is appropriate for anyone who may have been exposed to HIV. HIV exposure can occur through sexual contact without the use of an effective HIV prevention strategy (such as treatment as prevention, PrEP or condoms), sharing of needles or exposure to bodily fluids such as blood. HIV cannot be transmitted through casual contact such as hugging, kissing, or other skin to skin contact.

The people listed below should consider routine, regular HIV and sexually transmitted infection (STI) testing:

- gay and bisexual men and other men who have sex with men
- trans and gender diverse people
- people who inject drugs
- people who have multiple partners or recent partner change
- sexual and injecting partners of people living with HIV
- people who are from, have travelled to, or have partners from high prevalence countries

It is recommended that gay and bisexual men get tested for HIV and STIs up to four times per year.

WHAT IS AN HIV SELF-TEST?

An HIV self-test is an HIV test that you can perform yourself in the privacy of your own home or wherever you feel comfortable. The HIV self-test available in Australia is discrete, accurate and easy to use. After you have completed the test, you will be able to read your result in fifteen minutes.

The HIV self-test is a small cartridge containing a paper test strip. It is similar in size and shape to a USB drive. When it is made available in late March, the HIV self-test pack will include an HIV self-test cartridge, a set of instructions, a bottle of test fluid (which is added along with a blood sample), a disposal bag, and a Care Card with a list of contacts in case you have questions or concerns about the test or your result.

There is currently only one test approved for sale in Australia, the Atomo HIV Self-Test. It is important to only buy devices approved for sale, so you can be sure the result is accurate and that the device is safe to use.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

The test is a finger-prick blood test. The result is provided within fifteen minutes after performing the test.

HOW ACCURATE IS THE TEST?

The HIV self-test has been shown in laboratory testing to correctly identify 99.6% of HIV negative and HIV positive samples.

Like other HIV tests, the self-test may not detect HIV that is recently acquired. For the HIV self-test, the window period is three months. This means that the test may not detect HIV that has been acquired in the last three months.

If you think you have been exposed to HIV in the last three months, it is important to speak to a doctor or visit a sexual health clinic. If the potential exposure occurred within the last 72 hours, you may be eligible for post exposure prophylaxis (PEP), which can prevent HIV acquisition occurring.

HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?

The HIV self-test is expected to retail for around \$25, plus shipping and handling.

WHERE DO I GET ONE?

HIV self-tests will be available for purchase online. You will be required to watch an instructional video on the proper use of the test prior to completing your order.

HIV self-tests can also be distributed or sold by organisations such as AIDS Councils. You can find a list of relevant local organisations to discuss receiving a HIV self-test [here](#).

WHAT HAPPENS IF I GET A POSITIVE RESULT?

While the self-test is very accurate, it is still a screening test. Because it is a screening test, getting a positive result does not necessarily mean you have HIV. If you have received a positive result on the self-test, it will still need to be confirmed with further testing by a doctor. You can refer to the enclosed Care Card for more information about accessing follow-up testing.

If you receive a positive result with the follow-up testing, it is important that you speak to a doctor about starting treatment. HIV is a manageable condition, treatment today is very effective and those living with HIV are able to live long and healthy lives.

For more information on HIV self-testing please contact AFAO on (02) 9557 9399