



**September 2020**  
**Aware Newsletter**

This month's newsletter is going to focus on HIV testing and discuss HIV self-tests!

The medical system is currently looking for innovative ways to reach more individuals and get them tested for Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). There is still a significant amount of people living with HIV who are not getting tested and do not know their HIV status, so we need to figure out ways to make testing more accessible! Currently there are two methods of HIV testing and to have either test completed, the individual must attend a testing event or have a medical professional take blood to have it tested. The two types of tests are:


1. Standard HIV Testing
  - With this test, a blood sample is sent to a lab. There is a follow-up appointment when results of the test are completed.
2. Rapid Point-of-Care Testing
  - With this test, a blood sample is tested on site. The result of the test isn't necessarily positive or negative. The results are considered non-reactive (negative) or reactive (possibly positive). If the test is reactive, a blood sample will be sent to a lab to confirm results.



Canada is considering approving a new method of HIV testing; an at-home self test from a company called bioLytical. Watch this video to learn about how to use this testing method - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wiEUUV\\_bIXQc&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wiEUUV_bIXQc&feature=youtu.be) or type "INSTI HIV Self Test Training Video (EN)" into the YouTube search bar. This video shows how simple and easy it is to test your own blood at home.

By increasing accessibility to HIV testing the hope is to increase numbers of individuals in certain demographics getting tested. These are individuals such as those who use substances, men who have sex with men, and serodiscordant couples, where one partner is living with HIV and the other is not. This will help alleviate the time commitment regular testing takes when



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one needs to go to the doctor to have the test completed. There is also the barrier of not having a family physician that can be avoided by providing a self-test. Self-tests may also be preferred by some as HIV is still a stigmatized illness, and they might not want to receive testing services in public.

Why is it important to increase HIV testing?

Increasing HIV testing has many benefits:

- Early diagnosis and treatment assists those living with HIV to maintain good health
- When an individual knows their status, they then can learn how to keep those around them safe
- When on effective treatment and the viral load in the blood reaches an undetectable level, there is no way for HIV to be transmitted to sexual partners; Undetectable = Untransmittable!

Northreach will continue to update you as self-testing becomes available in Canada!

Newsletter information sourced from:

[https://www.catie.ca/en/pif/fall-2020/hiv-self-testing-learning-international-program-models-increase-testing?utm\\_source=CATIE%20Email%20Subscriptions&utm\\_campaign=8a5981122d-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2020\\_08\\_06\\_02\\_48&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_ae993f6577-8a5981122d-65290303&fbclid=IwAR0KAWR5tfyctPXU1nfJaQR2JEBMnuLzo3dd5Y8sZa7gzOwwZrCgpRGG-TE](https://www.catie.ca/en/pif/fall-2020/hiv-self-testing-learning-international-program-models-increase-testing?utm_source=CATIE%20Email%20Subscriptions&utm_campaign=8a5981122d-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_08_06_02_48&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_ae993f6577-8a5981122d-65290303&fbclid=IwAR0KAWR5tfyctPXU1nfJaQR2JEBMnuLzo3dd5Y8sZa7gzOwwZrCgpRGG-TE)


[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wiEUV\\_biXQc&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wiEUV_biXQc&feature=youtu.be)


<https://www.catie.ca/en/fact-sheets/testing/hiv-testing-process>

HIV Self-Testing webinar. September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Community-Based Research Centre & Alberta Community Council on HIV.



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