

A stylized illustration featuring a black banner with white text. The banner is curved and set against a background of brown and yellow textured panels. The text on the banner reads "REASONS TO BE TESTED".

REASONS TO BE TESTED

In the UK, men who have sex with men still make up the largest group of people infected with HIV. In London, 1 in 8 gay men is HIV-positive — and around 30% of them don't know they are.

Just being a gay man doesn't mean you need to be tested for HIV. However, if you have taken risks (especially if you have fucked or been fucked without a condom), it's possible that you have been infected. This booklet sets out 7 good reasons why, if you think you could have been infected, it's a good idea to find out for sure.

Reasons
to be
tested

Around 20% of the gay men diagnosed with HIV in the UK each year are diagnosed late — after the virus has already begun to damage their health.

If you have HIV and don't know it, you are in the worst possible position. You are much more likely to die than someone who has been diagnosed and is receiving medical care and other support.

New HIV drugs and treatments are being developed all the time, and an HIV-positive person who is receiving them has a good chance of living a normal lifespan with a good quality of life.

An HIV test
could save your
life

Only you can decide whether and when to be tested for HIV. But if you think there's a chance that you are HIV-positive, finding out for sure can be empowering.

For one thing, you will be able to stop worrying about whether or not you have been infected.

Armed with the facts, you will be better able to take control of your future, your health and the sex you have.

You're better
off knowing

You may have taken risks in the past and feel that you are likely to be HIV-positive. But research has shown that men's assumptions about their status are wrong more often than they are right. And getting a negative test result doesn't mean you're immune to HIV — it means you've been lucky.

If you test negative, you will be able to focus on staying negative. You could talk with a health adviser or counsellor about this (see page 21).

If you test negative,
your mind will be
put at ease

If you are HIV-positive, your best chance of living a long and healthy life lies in knowing your status. Once diagnosed, you will be able to get the medical, practical and emotional help that you need.

If you test positive, doctors will monitor your health and prescribe medications at the right time, before HIV has a chance to damage your immune system.

In order to live well
with HIV,

you must know
that you have it

If you don't know your HIV status, you may think that any risks you take are only endangering yourself. But if you are positive, you will have unknowingly been putting your partners at risk.

Being tested regularly means that you are more likely to discover HIV infection early, before you become ill, and before you pass it on.

If you are HIV-positive, you need to avoid catching other STIs, especially hepatitis C. Being infected with both HIV and hepatitis C can make your treatment more complicated.

If you test positive,
you can start
to protect yourself
and your partners

Many sexual health clinics offer a one-hour or same-day HIV test results service. Some also offer special clinic sessions for gay men (see pages 18-21).

Most clinics employ health advisers who can answer any questions you may have — about the test, for instance, or about the consequences for you of a positive result. They can also help you think about why you may have been taking risks.

HIV tests
are free
and confidential
at all GUM clinics

You and your partner might want to stop using condoms. If so, you can get tested to be sure you have the same HIV status, and then agree to protect each other by always using condoms if you have sex with others.

It's important that you talk through all the issues beforehand. The booklet *Agreements in Relationships* can help with this (see page 23).

If you are both positive, you would run a small risk of being reinfected with each other's strains of HIV, and you need to consider other STIs too. Your doctors can help you weigh up the pros and cons.

So you
and your partner
can be sure
of your HIV status

Testing Centres

Remember, all GUM clinics offer HIV testing services. For a full list of London clinics, visit gmfa.org.uk

One-hour test results are offered at the following clinics:

Sorted, 29 – 30 Soho Square, W1. Walk-in service for gay men on Wednesdays 5.30 – 8pm.

Sorted at CLASH, Warwick St, W1. Gay walk-in & appointments, Fridays 5.30 – 8pm. 020 7734 1794

Victoria Centre, Vincent Square, SW1.

Mon – Fri, by appointment only. 020 9746 8700

John Hunter Clinic, SW10.

Mon – Fri, by appointment only.

020 8846 6171/6154

West London Centre for Sexual Health, W4.

Mon – Fri, by appointment only. 020 8846 1567

Know for Sure Lighthouse West London, W11.

Walk-in service on Mondays 5 – 8pm.

020 7792 1200

K2, Kingston. Gay men's walk-in and appointments, Wednesdays 6 – 8pm.
020 8974 9331

Fastest South London, Waterloo SE1.
Walk-in service Thursdays 5 – 8pm. 020 7816 4720

Guys @ Mary's, Paddington, W2.
Appointment service for gay and bisexual men under 30, Wednesdays 6 – 8pm. 020 7886 6790

Ian Charleson Day Centre, NW3. Appointment service Tuesdays & Thursdays 9 – 10.30am.
020 7431 0970

FREE sexual health counselling for gay men is available at **PACE (020 7700 1323)** and at **HGL counselling @ THT (020 7812 1777)**.

You can also speak to a sexual health counsellor at most NHS sexual health clinics.

PACE and GMFA run a range of popular evening and weekend workshops and courses for gay and bisexual men. Themes include: relationships, assertiveness and sex & sexuality.

Check out **gmfa.org.uk** for more information or to book a place.

For more information:

- **THT Direct: 0845 1221 200 / tht.org.uk**
Mon – Fri, 10am – 10pm
Sat – Sun, noon – 6pm
- **National Sexual Health Line: 0800 567 123**
Freephone, 24 hours
- **NHS Direct: 0845 4647**
Lo-call, 24 hours
- **London Lesbian/Gay Switchboard: 020 7837 7324**
- **avert.org**
Information about testing and HIV in general

The Good Sexual Health Team at Camden Primary Care Trust produces a range of sexual health information booklets for gay men. You can view or download pdf versions of these booklets at gmfa.org.uk, or order hard copies from goodsexualhealthteam@camdenpct.nhs.uk or by ringing 020 7530 3956

LONDON GAY MEN'S
HIV Prevention Partnership

Camden 
Primary Care Trust





For condoms online. Any time.



 **freedom's-shop.com**
The highest quality condoms at the lowest prices. Anywhere.

www.freedom's-shop.com