Looking for more self-tests?

Nova Scotia Health's **STI Care Now** program offers free, confidential self-testing kits and virtual care to Nova Scotians aged 15 years and older seeking testing for gonorrhea, chlamydia, HIV & Syphilis testing or HIV screening.

Visit **nshealth.ca/sti-care-now** or scan this QR code for more information:

Thank you to the Community-Based Research Council (cbrc) and their Test Now Buddies project for the self-testing tips.

Northern Healthy Connections Society
25 Revere Street
Truro, NS
On-site: (902) 895-0931
Mobile Outreach: 902-956-3965
nhcsociety.ca

Tips & Tricks for HIV Self-Testing

Need support? Have questions about the HIV self-test, or HIV in general?

Reach out to Northern Healthy Connections Society for guidance on how to use an HIV self-test correctly.

CALL (902) 895-0931 or visit our fixed site at 25 Revere St, Truro NS

We can also connect you to resources such as confirmatory testing and HIV prevention tools.

How can I prepare for taking the HIV self-test?

- Watch an instructional video, read the directions carefully, and review this pamphlet.
- Consider talking to a friend or a healthcare provider.
- Find a safe environment and make a plan for what you will do after your test.
- You may want to do the test alone, or you may want someone you trust to be with you.

GETTING STARTED

- **If the test is cold or hot from being outside, let it get to room temperature before use.**
- Watch one of the instructional videos and go over the instruction sheet carefully before using the test. Visit:

2SLGBTQ+ friendly video

Manufacturer's instruction video

- Have a clean tissue available to wipe your finger if needed.
- Open the bandaid so it's out of the package and ready to use.
- Read the result in a well lit area - even if the dot(s) are faint, it is a valid result.

COLLECTING THE BLOOD SAMPLE

- Dry your hands very well after washing them. Damp hands can make it harder to get the blood sample to drop into bottle #1.
- Remove the cap from bottle #1 **before** pricking your finger.
- Massage your finger towards the tip before the finger prick. Once you've pricked your finger, you can continue to massage it to help with the blood flow.
- Use a **full drop of blood** when testing.
- Once you add the blood sample to bottle #1, the liquid should be a similar colour to its red cap. If the liquid is pale red, add an extra drop of blood.
- To get the blood into bottle #1, gravity and patience can help! Once the blood drop is big/heavy enough, it **will** fall down. Avoid scraping your finger on the bottle.

What happens if I get an invalid result?

- We know this can make some folks feel anxious. First, double-check the result in a well lit area - even if the dot(s) are faint, it is a valid result.
- If you're still unsure you can try another HIV self-test, or see a healthcare provider and get a standard HIV test. (Visit whereto.catie.ca to find out where to get HIV testing near you.)

If your test results are positive, negative, or invalid - you're welcome to reach out to NHCS for support. A positive result requires a confirmatory HIV test, where blood is taken from your arm and sent to a lab for testing.

When should I use the HIV self-test?

It takes time for a sexually transmitted infection (STI) to show up on a test. This is called the "window period". No test can detect HIV immediately. The HIV self-test detects HIV antibodies (the body's immune response), not the virus itself. **It can take 3 to 12 weeks for a person's body to make enough HIV antibodies for an HIV self-test to detect them.** If you are concerned about a specific incident in the last 72 hours, go to the ER for HIV post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP).