

June 22, 2007

NEW 60 SECOND TEST AND EXPANDED TESTING PROGRAM PROVIDES MORE OPTIONS FOR HIV TESTING

POINT OF CARE HIV TESTING

The rapid Point of Care (POC) is a reliable test that screen for antibodies to HIV in blood. Within 60 seconds, a drop of blood can determine whether or not an individual has developed antibodies to HIV. The test is much faster than traditional HIV testing which takes two weeks to receive results.

The free test is as accurate as current laboratory based testing in Ontario and the whole process takes about 20 minutes including pre-test counseling, test administration, and post-test counseling. A test that shows the presence of antibodies will require additional blood analysis from a laboratory to confirm a positive HIV result. If the test does not show the presence of antibodies, then a client is considered to be negative, unless the infection occurred within the “window period” of anti-body development, usually up to three months.

POC testing is currently available through a pilot program at Toronto’s Hassle Free Clinic, a sexually transmitted infections clinic and anonymous HIV testing site. Hassle Free Clinic's successful program was initiated in May 2006. The Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's POC program, the first for Canada, will provide POC testing at Ontario's 50 anonymous HIV testing sites, and some of the province’s public health units’ sexually transmitted infections clinics and community health centres, starting fall 2007.

The government will spend about \$55 million in 2007/08 for HIV/AIDS related programs, services, and initiatives to help address the epidemic and those affected and infected in Ontario. This does not include doctor billings to OHIP or HIV/AIDS drugs.

ANONYMOUS HIV TESTING

Purpose of Anonymous HIV Testing

Anonymous HIV testing sites provide HIV testing without having to provide any information that would reveal a person’s identity. The sites are meant to encourage people at high-risk of exposure to HIV to get tested. Experts say 30 per cent of people who are HIV positive are unaware of their status. The additional 24 anonymous testing sites announced today will bring the total number of sites in the province to 50 and will increase access to testing for those high-risk undiagnosed individuals. The HIV test is free.

The goals of the anonymous HIV testing program are:

- To encourage high risk individuals to be tested and promote access to treatment and prevention;

- To provide reassurance about the confidentiality of HIV testing;
- To provide appropriate HIV education and counseling (including prevention strategies and partner notification);
- To ensure referrals to appropriate medical and support services as needed;
- To evaluate the program in a comprehensive manner.

Selection of New Anonymous Sites

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care’s AIDS Bureau established a working group of community representatives, researchers, and ministry staff to prepare an application and review process for the proposed anonymous HIV testing sites. The ministry approved 24 sites for designation. Training will be provided throughout the late summer and the new anonymous sites are expected to open this fall.

HIV Testing Methods

There are two ways to get tested for HIV in Ontario – anonymous and routine. An anonymous test substitutes a person’s name for a code and no personal information is kept about the person’s identity with the request for a test or result. Routine testing involves the collection of information about the person’s identity.

HIV testing in Ontario is only mandatory if donating blood, semen or an organ.

The new anonymous testing sites, by Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) are:

LHIN	NEW ANONYMOUS TESTING SITES
Erie St. Clair	Midwifery Collective of Essex County, Leamington Municipality of Chatham-Kent Health and Family Services Public Health Unit, Chatham
Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant	Halton Region Health Department, Burlington Transitions for Youth, Burlington
Toronto Central	Kensington Midwives, Toronto Lawrence Heights Community Health Centre, Toronto Parkdale Community Health Centre, Toronto Planned Parenthood of Toronto, Toronto Sages Femmes Rouge Valley Midwives, Toronto Women's Health in Women's Hands, Toronto

Central	Regional Municipality of York, Public Health Branch, Newmarket
Central East	Durham Region Health Department, Whitby
Champlain	<p>Carlington Community and Health Services, Ottawa</p> <p>Équipe de santé familiale communautaire de l'est d'Ottawa, Ottawa</p> <p>Ottawa Inner City Health, Ottawa</p> <p>Ottawa Valley Midwives, Carleton Place</p> <p>Pinecrest-Queensway Health and Community Services, Ottawa</p> <p>South-East Ottawa Community Health Centre, Ottawa</p> <p>Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health, Ottawa</p>
North East	<p>Porcupine Health Unit, Timmins</p> <p>Timiskaming Health Unit, Temiskaming Shores</p> <p>North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit, North Bay</p>
North West	<p>Northwestern Health Unit, Kenora</p> <p>Wassay Gezhig Na Nahn Dah We Igamig, Keewatin</p>

The existing anonymous testing sites, by LHIN are as follows:

LHIN	ANONYMOUS TESTING SITES
Erie St. Clair	<p>Windsor-Essex County Health Unit, Windsor</p> <p>Windsor Regional Hospital, Windsor</p>
South West	<p>Elgin-St. Thomas Health Unit, St. Thomas</p> <p>London InterCommunity Health Centre, London</p>
Waterloo Wellington	<p>Region of Waterloo Public Health, 99 Regina Street South, Waterloo</p> <p>Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Health Unit, Belwood</p>

Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant	City of Hamilton Public Health and Community Services Department, Hamilton Regional Niagara Public Health Department, Niagara Falls
Central West	Peel Health Department, Brampton
Toronto Central	Anishnawbe Health Toronto, Toronto Bay Centre for Birth Control, Women's College Hospital, Toronto Birth Control & Venereal Disease Information Centre, Toronto Central Toronto Community Health Centres Queen West Site, Toronto Centre francophone de Toronto, Toronto Toronto Public Health, Toronto Hassle Free Clinic, Toronto Rexdale Community Health Centre, Toronto
South East	Kingston, Frontenac and Lennox and Addington Health Unit, Kingston
Champlain	Centretown Community Health Centre, Ottawa. Ottawa Public Health Department, Ottawa Sandy Hill Community Health Centre, Ottawa Somerset West Community Health Centre, Ottawa
North Simcoe Muskoka	Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, Barrie
North East	Algoma Health Unit, Sault Ste. Marie Sudbury and District Health Unit, Sudbury
North West	Thunder Bay District Health Unit, Thunder Bay

For more information about the anonymous testing sites, their locations, or HIV/AIDS programs in general, call the AIDS and Sexual Health InfoLine:

For services in English and 16 additional languages call 1-800-668-2437 (toll-free in Ontario).

Hours of operation are:

Monday to Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 p.m.

Saturday and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

For services in French call 1-800-267-7432 (toll free in Ontario).

Hours of operation are:

Monday to Thursday from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and 1:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

No weekend service

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