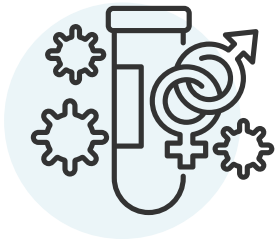


# PATIENT INFORMATION

## Dried Blood Spot Testing for HIV, Hepatitis C, and Syphilis



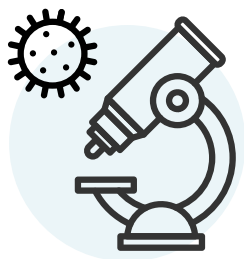
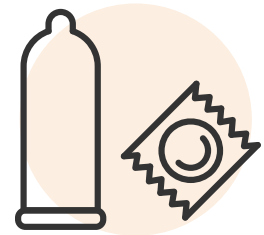
### Why is routine testing for sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections (STBBIs) important?

Knowing whether you have an STBBI is important to your health and the health of others. As people can live without symptoms for a long time, your health may be affected without your knowledge. You might even pass an infection on to a friend or family member.

If you provide a blood sample today, you can choose which of the available tests you'd like to have performed: HIV, hepatitis C (HCV), syphilis. If enough blood is collected, one sample card can be used to test for all three infections. **You have the right to refuse to be tested.**

### Important information about sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections

HIV, HCV, and syphilis can all be spread from one person to another during unprotected sex (vaginal, anal, and sometimes oral), or by blood contact (such as sharing equipment for snorting, smoking, or injecting drugs). Treatment for these infections is free for BC residents.



### How does Dried Blood Spot Testing (DBST) work?

DBST is different from other blood tests because instead of using a needle to collect blood from your vein, it is just a simple finger prick. The blood droplets are then collected on a special piece of paper that is sent to the lab for testing. DBST is a type of testing that is confirmatory for HIV and HCV. This means that you usually don't need another blood test to confirm the result. If a positive syphilis test result is received, you will need another blood test to confirm diagnosis. DBST is not as sensitive as traditional blood tests. This means that there is a small chance (up to 4%) that you will get a false negative result. If you have reason to believe that you've been exposed to one of the infections, it is recommended that you follow up with traditional lab testing.

### Test results

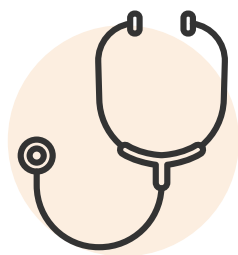
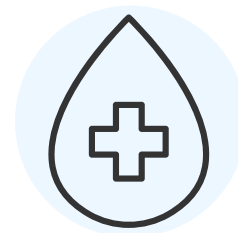
It may take three to four weeks to receive your test results. **If you have a positive test result**, you will be contacted by the doctor, nurse practitioner, or nurse who ordered your lab work, or by a public health nurse. If you want to confirm that your results are negative, you can book a follow up appointment with your health care provider or the Northern Health Communicable Diseases Team (1-855-755-3555).



If you receive a positive result, you will receive support, education, and information about follow-up care and treatment.

HIV, HCV, and syphilis are all reportable communicable diseases under provincial law. If a positive HIV or HCV test result is received, the Northern Health Medical Health Officer will be notified. This public health doctor is responsible for the care of people who may have been exposed.

If you test positive for HIV or HCV, your test result is kept in a provincial database and other health care databases. We collect, use, and disclose information only where permitted or authorized by the BC Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.



### Repeat testing

Sometimes we aren't able to collect enough sample to run all of tests requested or to confirm a positive result. In that case, you may be asked to have follow-up testing performed.

It is important to test, even if you have no symptoms, so that any STBBIs can be diagnosed and treated. Talk to your health care provider about how often you should be tested. You can access repeat testing through your health care provider, clinics in your community, or through virtual clinics. Testing locations can be found with the SmartSex Clinic Finder (<https://smartsexresource.com/get-tested/clinic-finder>). You can also book a virtual appointment through:

First Nations Virtual Doctor of the Day: 1-855-344-3800

Northern Health's Virtual Primary & Community Care Clinic: 1-844-645-7811

Options for Sexual Health's Telehealth Service: 1-800-739-7367

### Resources

HealthLink BC (general health information): 8-1-1 [www.healthlinkbc.ca](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca)

Northern Health's Specialized Support Team for HIV/HCV: 1-888-645-6495

**HIV101.ca**