

Anyone can access a free HIV test in Alberta. Family doctors, walk in clinics, hospitals, and family planning clinics can provide a referral to a lab, but we recommend three places in Calgary that provide testing on site:

Safeworks: have three offices in the city (Drop-in centre, Centre of Hope, 8th and 8th Health Clinic) and a van that can meet people anywhere within city limits (operates in the evening): Cell-850-3755

STD Clinic: 404, 906 8th Avenue SW, (403) 944-7575

CUPS Community Health Centre: 128 7th Avenue SE, (403) 221-8780

These all provide pre test counseling and are all confidential meaning that they do not require any identification and individuals do not need to provide their real names.

* Please note that if the test comes back positive they may ask for other identifying information from the client. "Since May 2003, HIV infection has been a notifiable disease in every jurisdiction in Canada — in other words, every diagnosed case of HIV infection must be reported to the relevant public health authorities, usually by physicians or the laboratories that conduct the tests." (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2006)

Anonymous testing is also available at these test sites, meaning that they do not have to disclose any personal information, even if they do test positive. The testing sites will just report whatever information that they can. If they do access health care for HIV related treatment, such as through the Southern Alberta Clinic, they will then need to disclose their name and personal information.

Length of Time That Someone Should Wait After Exposure (Window Period)

According to Alberta Health, the test looks for the immune system's response to the virus rather than the virus itself. These are called antibodies and they can take anywhere from three weeks to six months to show up. 95% percent of positive test results will show up in three months.

What to Expect During and After the Test

The nurse conducting the test may provide pre test counseling and may ask questions to determine whether someone is a low, medium, or high risk for HIV. They want to ensure that the person getting tested is prepared for the results, whether they may come back negative or positive. The test is a simple blood test and the results take about one week to come back. The results have to be given back in person and the client would have to initiate contact, especially if the test is confidential or anonymous.

References

Alberta Health and Wellness. STD: Taking care of Yourself and Others (2007)
http://www.health.gov.ab.ca/public/SX10Student.htm#HIV_AIDS

Public Health Agency of Canada. "HIV Testing and Infection Reporting in Canada", in *HIV/AIDS Epi Update* (August 2006), pp 13–18.
http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/aids-sida/about/surv_e.html