

KEEPING PREVENTION STANDARD DURING A PANDEMIC

Provider Resources for Routine HIV Testing during COVID-19

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that there are approximately 1.2 million people living with HIV (PLWH) in the United States (US). Approximately 13% (>160,000) of these individuals do not know they are living with HIV as they have not yet been tested.

These challenges require unique and innovative approaches to enable continued HIV testing while maintaining social distancing and stay at home orders. The COVID-19 pandemic response has scaled-back in-person contact in health care settings where traditional testing typically takes place.

To maintain the health and safety of patients and healthcare professionals while continuing to provide the essential health service of routine HIV testing and PrEP care, the use of telehealth, home specimen collection kits for STI testing, and HIV self-test kits, are encouraged when laboratory testing services are not available. Our program can provide additional information on the use of these kits to continue HIV testing without the need for in-person visits.

Self-Testing for HIV and PrEP

Patients seeking at-home HIV testing options can use the oral fluid based self-test called the OraQuick In-Home HIV test. Providers are encouraged to provide patients with the option of having a self-test kit mailed to their home, and to provide education and linkage to care if a test kit is positive.

The use of the OraQuick oral fluid In-Home HIV test for initiating or continuing PrEP should only be considered when other options are not available, due to the lower sensitivity of oral fluid-based testing compared with other testing options. Lab-only quarterly visits are preferred for PrEP clients. If lab-based testing is not available, home specimen collection or self-test kits are an option. If the self-test comes back negative during an evaluation for PrEP, please consider prescribing a 90-supply of the medication to reduce in-person contact and to help encourage adherence.

HIV TESTING
It's Routine!



Self-testing may be covered by some insurance payors and Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA) or Health Reimbursement Accounts (HRA). Providers may contact the insurance/FSA/HRA plans to determine whether self-testing is covered. Alternatively, the Florida Department of Health provides free at-home testing kits to Florida residents who are seeking an HIV test. Test kits can be ordered at <https://knowyourhivstatus.com/get-a-free-home-testing-kit/>.

Clients can also contact their local health department for information on how to request kits as well as HIV counseling and prevention services.

Home Specimen Collection for PrEP Care

Home specimen collection kits are a recommended alternative when in-person lab visits are not feasible for starting or continuing PrEP care. Kits allow collection of samples to test for HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STI) including gonorrhea, chlamydia, and syphilis. The kits can be ordered by physicians and delivered by mail directly to patients' homes.

Testing kits may be covered by insurance plans and can contain the appropriate panel of tests needed to start or continue PrEP care. Home specimen collection kits contain the detailed packaging and supplies needed for the patient to self-collect blood, rectal and pharyngeal swabs, and urine specimens at home. The specimens are then sent by mail to a laboratory for testing and reported to the issuing provider.

Our program can help to establish home-testing protocols and plans for your healthcare setting.

Remote Management and Telehealth

In order to maintain the health and safety of patients and healthcare professionals while continuing to provide the essential health service of routine HIV testing and PrEP care, we encourage the use of telehealth services and remote management. Remote management and telehealth services can be utilized for taking a sexual history to develop a risk reduction plan, assistance with HIV self-testing, and starting or continuing PrEP care.

Telehealth is an efficient and convenient way to engage patients in care while maintaining the safety of providers and their staff. The U.S. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has temporarily expanded access to Medicare telehealth services under the 1135 waiver authority and the coronavirus preparedness and response supplemental Appropriation Act, effective March 6, 2020.

Summary of Changes for 2022

- Clinical Guidance for PrEP and PEP navigation and patient assistance for covering the cost of prevention medication
- Strategies to continue routine HIV testing and PrEP care during COVID-19:
 - o HIV Self-testing kits
 - o Home Specimen Collection Kits for STI Testing
 - o Telehealth services
 - o Remote Management
- Information on billing and reimbursement for telehealth visits, HIV self-testing kits, and home specimen collection kits for routine testing and PrEP care
- Health plans including Medicaid and Medicare are required to cover PrEP before any deductible and without coinsurance and copayment
- Generic PrEP medication (tenofovir disoproxil fumarate/ emtricitabine) is now available in the United States and is approved by most insurance plans
- Long-acting injectable PrEP medication (cabotegravir) has been FDA approved in the United States

Resources

<https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/testing/self-testing.html>

https://www.cdc.gov/nchhstp/dear_colleague/2020/dcl-042820-HIV-self-testing-guidance.html

https://www.cdc.gov/nchhstp/dear_colleague/2020/dcl-051520-PrEP-during-COVID-19.html

<https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/basics/hiv-testing/hiv-self-tests.html>