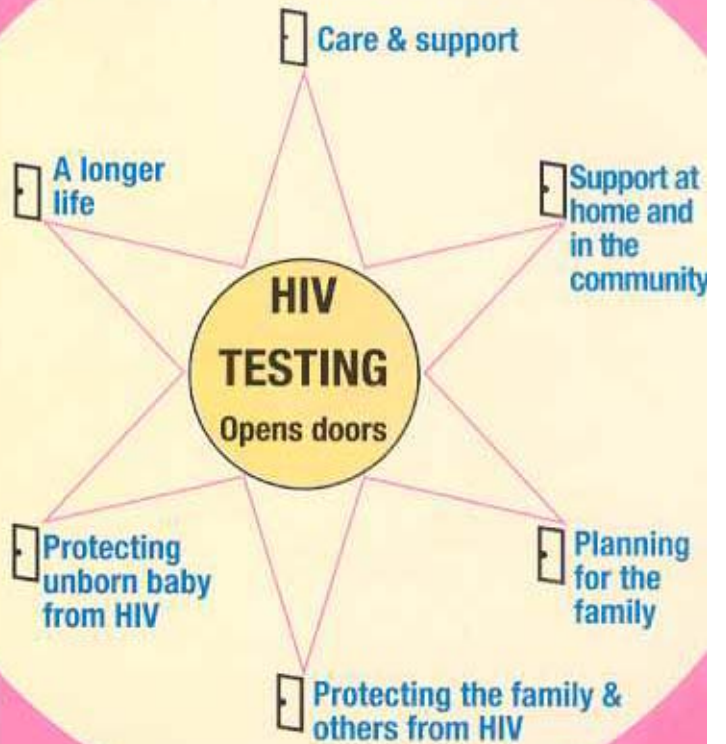


Counselling and HIV Testing

Open Doors to a longer life



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Counselling and HIV Testing

Counselling and HIV testing involves:

- Discussing to prepare a person for an HIV test.
- Testing the person if he or she chooses to take the test.
- Giving the person test results.
- Discussing with the person the meaning of the test results.
- Discussing what the person can do to live a longer life and protect himself or herself and other people from HIV.

In Zambia, HIV testing:

- Is taken by people who have been counselled and have decided to take the test willingly.
- Is private. The results of the test are given only to the person who is tested.
- Is free of charge in government health centres and hospitals.

Do many people go for counselling and HIV testing in Zambia?

Many people go for counselling and HIV testing in Zambia because they know that fighting HIV and AIDS starts with knowing whether they have HIV or not.



Why should you go for counselling and HIV testing?

About 16.5% of Zambians have HIV. But you cannot know whether you or somebody else has HIV just

by looking. You can only know by going for counselling and HIV testing.

- **Counselling and HIV testing opens doors to care and support.** Going for counselling and HIV testing gives you the information you need to get care and support.
- **Counselling and HIV testing opens doors to support at home and in the community.** After you know that you are HIV-positive or HIV-negative, your family can give the support you need. Health workers and counsellors can tell you the groups you can join for company and support.
- **Counselling and HIV testing opens doors to protecting your unborn baby from HIV infection.** Women need to know whether they have HIV or not before they decide to have a baby. The information will help health workers to give them the advice they need to protect the baby from HIV infection.



- **Counselling and HIV testing opens doors to protecting your family and other people from HIV.** Knowing whether you have HIV or not helps you to discuss HIV and AIDS with family members and find ways of protecting each other from HIV.

- **Counselling and HIV testing opens doors to planning for the future of your family.** Knowing whether you have HIV or not reminds and gives you time to plan for your family.
- **Counselling and HIV testing opens doors to a longer life.** More than 80% of Zambians are HIV-negative. And when they take an HIV test, they are relieved to know that they do not have HIV. If you test HIV-positive, you can live positively and live a longer life.

Living Positively to live a longer life

- Accept your situation positively.
- Tell your sex partner and family members that you have HIV and discuss how family members can support you.
- Ask your partner to go for counselling and HIV testing.
- Avoid sex or use a condom every time you have sex.
- Eat different kinds of food found at home to improve your health.
- Continue doing your work and daily activities as usual.
- Stop or reduce beer drinking and cigarette smoking.
- Go for treatment as soon as you get sick.
- Do exercises to keep your body fit.
- Join a group which can give you support.
- Find time to rest.

Counselling and HIV testing can open doors to a longer life. Accept your situation positively, to have a longer life.

Questions and answers about Counselling and HIV testing

- i) ***I am sure that I am HIV-negative. Do I need to go for counselling and HIV testing?***

Most people contract HIV through having sex with an HIV-positive person. But you can also get HIV in other ways. Only an HIV test can tell whether you have HIV or not.

- ii) ***Will people not avoid me if they get to know that I am HIV-positive?***

Some people are afraid that if they take an HIV test, other people will get to know about it and avoid them if they test HIV-positive. Other people avoid HIV-positive people because they think that HIV-positive people can give them HIV. But remember:

- The HIV test is taken in private.
- Results are given only to the person who has taken the test, and other people do not have to know those results. And after testing:
 - ▶ Health workers and counsellors advise and give support to you.
 - ▶ Health workers and counsellors help you to find a group you can join for support.



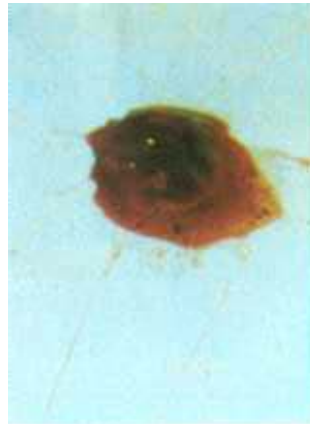
- If people get to know that you are HIV-positive, tell them the truth. Assure them that:
 - ▶ Having HIV is not having AIDS. It is like having any other infection. You can live 15 or more years with HIV before you begin to feel sick.
 - ▶ People get HIV only in the following ways:



1. Having sex with an infected person without using a condom.



2. Getting blood from a person with HIV. (This is not common because blood given in hospitals is checked and does not have HIV).



3. Coming in contact with blood from an HIV-positive person.



4. Using razor blades, needles, knives, and other sharp things which have been used by an HIV-positive person and have HIV on them.

You cannot get HIV by living together, shaking hands, eating together, using the same toilet or latrine, sleeping in the same room, using the same plates, or playing games together.

iii) ***Will knowing that I have HIV give me worries and lead to early death?***

Some people fear to go for counselling and HIV testing to know whether they have HIV. So they keep away and pretend that all is well. By the time they know that they are HIV-positive, it is too late to do much about it. Knowing that you have HIV early gives you a chance to act and live longer. It reminds and encourages you to plan for your family.