

Information on rapid tests at Checkpoint Erfurt

(Antibody rapid tests for HIV & syphilis as well as HCV)



When does a test make sense? Do I have to observe a waiting period?

- If the test is **not intended to check a specific risk situation** and there are **no symptoms** of a possible infection, there is **no waiting period**. The test then provides a reliable result about your blood or infection status 3 months ago and before.
→ Useful in case of: general interest, annual routine, mutual partner test in a new relationship
- If a test is to be used to check **one (or more) specific risk situation(s)**, the **last** of these situations must have occurred **at least 3 months ago**, otherwise the test cannot yet reliably exclude an infection. The result would then be uncertain and therefore useless.
- **Risk situations** are, for example, vaginal or anal sex without a condom as well as intravenous and/or nasal drug use, especially if consumption utensils were shared with other people. Oral sex is not a risk situation with regard to HIV & HCV. However, transmission of syphilis is possible!
→ Useful in case of: unsafe sex with an unknown partner, unsafe / possibly sexualised substance use.

Which rapid test kits are used? How does the rapid test work and how reliable is the result?

- Before the actual test, a detailed counselling and anamnesis of the test candidate takes place. With the verbal consent of the person concerned, the test is carried out by a qualified specialist (HIV counsellor) in a room specially set aside for this purpose and in accordance with current medical hygiene standards. **Only a few drops of blood from the fingertip are needed**, which are obtained through a almost painless puncture with a fine lancet.
- For HIV/syphilis detection we use the combination rapid test "INSTI Multiplex HIV-1/-2/Syphilis" (Biolytical), for HCV detection the "INFO anti-HCV" (Turklab). Both tests detect infections with **99.9 - 100% reliably**. The HIV/Syphilis result is available **immediately**, the HCV result after **15 minutes**.

How is Checkpoint Erfurt financed? What costs do I incur?

- The material costs of the "Checkpoint Erfurt" (e.g. test kits, laboratory equipment, etc.) are mainly financed by donations and own funds as well as a proportion of subsidies. The use of counselling and the test is in principle free of charge for all interested parties. However, we ask all those who can afford it to **make a donation**, as we incur costs of between 10€ (HCV) and 30€ (HIV/Syph) per test. With your donation, you help to make it possible for people with little or no income to access our test offer. Thank you very much! :-)

What to do if a result is reactive?

- **A reactive HIV result** must be checked promptly by a HIV specialist and, if necessary, treated immediately (→ **HIV focus practices** in Thuringia). HIV infection is **not yet curable, but can be treated very well today**. Confirmed HIV+ people receive antiretroviral drugs that lower their viral load and enable them to lead a largely normal life from about 6 months after starting therapy. They are then protected from developing AIDS and can no longer pass the virus on to others. Modern HIV drugs are highly effective and well tolerated. A fulfilling sexuality, partnership and parenthood or the natural birth of a child are also possible.
- **A reactive syphilis result** should also be checked by a doctor (→urologist) and treated if necessary. Acute syphilis usually **can be cured completely and without consequences** within 3 weeks by administering penicillin. If syphilis remains untreated, however, there is a risk of severe physical symptoms and damage in the long term (skin changes such as scarring and necrosis, functional disorders of the internal organs).
→ You should refrain from **condomless sex (vaginal, anal, oral!)** until the acute infection has been reliably cleared up or healed in order to avoid passing it on to others or "back-and-forth transmissions" between regular sex partners. If possible, you should also inform your sex partners of the last 3 months about your status so that they can also be tested.
- **A reactive HCV result** requires competent specialist treatment after laboratory diagnostic confirmation of the hepatitis C virus (the rapid test only detects HCV-specific antibodies). **Hepatitis C is curable!** The standard antiviral therapy has few side effects, is relatively well tolerated and lasts about 8 weeks. It is 95% successful in terms of a complete cure. You can get more information from your attending doctor.