



HIV SELF-TESTING

What it is and how to integrate it into HIV Testing Services

In Zambia, Ministry of Health (MoH) supports the use of WHO approved HIV self-testing kits for people who may not be able to access facility-based testing for different reasons HIV self-testing provides an opportunity for such people to test themselves in private and in their own time.

HIV self-testing is not intended to displace facility-based HIV testing but is rather a complementary approach to reach previously untested, hard-to reach, and test-averse populations.

Currently, the WHO approved INSTI HIV Self-Test for the African market. The INSTI HIV Self-Test detects HIV antibodies in a drop of blood obtained through fingerstick collection procedures.

Any positive result from a self-testing kit requires confirmatory testing using the national HIV testing algorithm. Display algorithm NOW including HIV self-testing.

HIV self-testing refers to a process in which a person collects his or her own specimen (blood or oral fluid) and then performs HIV testing and interprets the result often in a private setting, either alone or with someone he or she trusts.

A reactive (positive) result always requires confirmatory testing by a trained tester following the national testing algorithm.

All healthcare providers should support clients who have self-tested by conducting a rapid HIV test and if positive, a confirmatory rapid HIV test together with appropriate pre- and post-test counseling.

Interpretation of a non-reactive (negative) result will depend on the ongoing risk of HIV exposure. Individuals with possible exposure within the past 3 months should be encouraged to re-test 3 months after possible HIV exposure. While individuals with high ongoing risk, should be encouraged to re-test regularly. Re-testing can be done with an HIV self-testing kit or a facility-based rapid test.

A person may also get an invalid result or may have struggled to interpret their result. Instructions in the kit recommend attending a health facility where a trained tester will conduct testing following the national testing algorithm.

HIV self-testing is not recommended for anyone on ARVs or PrEP, as it may lead to a false negative result. HIV self-testing in Zambia is recommended for people who are 16 years and above.

HIV self-testing is acceptable to many people across different contexts and can therefore increase uptake and frequency of HIV testing, particularly among populations at high ongoing risk of HIV, who may be less likely to access testing or test less frequently than recommended.

HIV self-testing kits used by self-testers can perform as accurately as when used by a trained tester.

