

# Dried blood spot test

## What is a 'self-sampling' dried blood spot (DBS) test?

The DBS 'self-sampling' test is when you take a sample of blood yourself. The blood sample is sent to a laboratory and a DBS test is done to see if the blood has HIV or hepatitis C.

## How does the DBS test work and how long does it take to get the result?

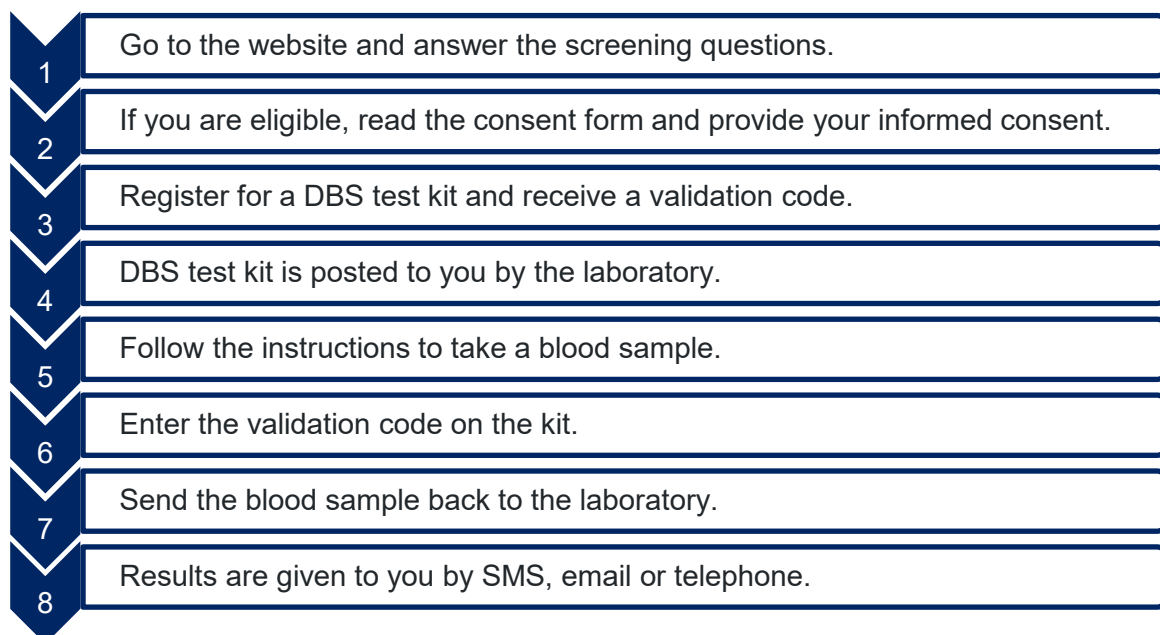
The DBS test works by testing a small drop of blood from your finger that has been spread on a test card and left to dry. The card is then sent by you to a laboratory where it is tested to see if the blood has HIV or hepatitis C.

The DBS test is free, and a kit can be ordered online and sent to you in the mail. You may also pick up a test at selected health services, who may help you with doing the test.

The DBS testing kit has an instruction sheet, a blotting card, a device to prick your finger, a band-aid, and a pre-paid envelope for you to post the dried blood sample to the laboratory.

The laboratory will do the DBS test on the test card you send back via the post. Results will be given to you in a week.

## The DBS test process



---

## Who can have a self-sampling DBS test?

DBS tests for HIV are offered to people aged over 16 years living in NSW and are:

- a gay man or man who has sex with other men, or
- people with a transgender history, or
- a person from a country within Africa or Asia or other countries where HIV is more common, or
- a person who has a current or previous sexual partner/s from one of the above groups.

DBS tests for hepatitis C are offered to people aged over 16 years living in NSW and are:

- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, or
- a person that has ever injected a drug, or
- a person from a country within Africa, the Middle East, or other countries where hepatitis C is more common
- a person that is currently or has ever been in prison
- a person who attends or has attended community corrections services
- a person who uses or has used drug and alcohol services or mental health services
- a person who is or has been homeless.

If you do not fall into one of these groups you cannot have a DBS test, but you can have a standard test done by a doctor. To find out where to have a HIV test call the NSW Sexual Health Infolink on 1800 451 624.

---

## How do I order a self-sampling DBS test kit?

To order a free DBS test kit, visit the DBS website ([www.health.nsw.gov.au/dbstest](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/dbstest)) and follow the instructions.

You will need to answer some questions, including some personal questions, to make sure you can have the DBS test. Your personal information will be kept confidential.

---

## How much does the DBS kit cost?

The DBS test is free for people participating in the program.

---

## Can I give my DBS kit to someone else?

No. The DBS test can only be used by you.

---

## How do I get the results of my DBS test?

A sexual health nurse from Sexual Health Infolink will contact you with your results, or it may be possible for the health service who helped you do the test, to provide your results.

One of the following results will be given to you:

- **Negative** - no HIV or hepatitis C infection. You will get your results either by SMS, email, a phone call or in person.
- **Detected** - possible HIV or hepatitis C infection. You will get an SMS or email asking you to call the health service or nurse on 1800 451 624. The nurse will talk to you about having a standard HIV or hepatitis C test done by a doctor.
- **Invalid** - the test did not work. You will get an SMS or email asking you to call the health service or nurse on 1800 451 624. The nurse will talk to you about having another DBS HIV and hepatitis C test or a standard HIV and hepatitis C test done by a doctor.
- **Detected HCV RNA  $\leq$  40IU/ml** - The DBS test for hepatitis C (RNA) was detected but was at a low level. The level was so low the lab could not determine how much virus was present in the DBS sample. This result has two meanings. One is that you may be infected with HCV and the other is that the DBS test result could be false. A blood test is needed to confirm it. In the meantime avoid any exposure of your blood to others.

---

## What happens if HIV or hepatitis C shows in my DBS test result?

If the DBS test shows HIV or hepatitis C in your sample, you will need to have a standard blood test to confirm HIV or hepatitis C infection. The nurse or health service will tell you where you can go for a standard HIV or hepatitis C test. The nurse or health service will also contact you within 7 days to ask if you need any more assistance.

---

## How accurate is DBS test?

Overall, DBS tests are very accurate, close to 100% accuracy. A very small number of tests can give a 'false positive result'. This means the test result is positive even if a person does not have HIV or hepatitis C infection.

---

## Will my information be kept private and confidential?

Your result will only be given to you.

The DBS test is new in NSW. By doing the test, you are agreeing to your information, confidential test results and any follow-up information being collected.

Your information will be given to health workers involved in your care.

Your information, without your personal details, will also be used to assess if the DBS testing program should continue. Your information will be reported in a way that ensures you cannot be identified.

---

## What should I do if I think I have HIV or hepatitis C?

If you think you have HIV or hepatitis C, please call the nurse on 1800 451 624 or speak to your doctor. It may be better to have a standard blood test instead of the DBS test.

If you have had unprotected sex within the last 3 days and are worried HIV has been passed on to you, please call the nurse on 1800 451 624. They may advise you to see a doctor for Post-Exposure

Prophylaxis (PEP). PEP is one month of treatment to reduce the chance of getting HIV infection. PEP only works if taken within 72 hours (3 days).

---

## What could happen if I do not have a test for HIV or hepatitis C?

You could have HIV or hepatitis C and not know. Knowing if you have HIV or hep C is important for your own health and wellbeing and for preventing HIV or hepatitis C from being passed on to other people.

---

## Staying safe

You can protect yourself and others from HIV by always using a condom if you have anal or vaginal sex. Condoms protect you and your partners against HIV, and other sexually transmissible infections (STIs).

You can protect yourself and others from hepatitis C by always using sterile injecting equipment, never sharing needles or injecting equipment, or any other sharp objects such as razors,

If you are worried you may have HIV, hepatitis C or other STIs talk to your doctor or talk to a sexual health nurse on 1800 451 624 for more information.

---

## Is this information sheet available in languages other than English?

This information sheet is available in Chinese (Traditional).

---

## Where can I find out more?

Visit the DBS testing website ([www.health.nsw.gov.au/dbstest](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/dbstest)) or call the NSW Sexual Health Infolink on 1800 451 624.