# Prick and Tell

Home HIV tests made easy

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A friend wants to (has to) get tested, but is afraid to go to his doctor again, can't wait a month for a clinic appointment and is driving you nuts with "Eeeek, what if I'm poz?" hobgoblins. What's an HIVer to do? Tell him to go test himself.

Jab, smear, mail, call. That's all it takes to find out one's HIV status with the FDA-approved Home Access HIV-1 Test System. The self-testing kits, on the market since last year, contain an easy-to-use lancet for drawing blood, a test card for the sample, a pre-paid shipping envelope and simple, straightforward instructions. For $39.95, the standard mail-in provides results in seven days. Or being a positively positive pal, you can spring an extra 10 bucks to shorten his wait—and your drama—to three days. It's all anonymous—testees use a code number for calling in to register and to get results; trained counselors are available 24/7—not only at the Big Moment but also for follow-up. In an in-house test at POZ, both negative and positive results were delivered professionally and sensitively. One counselor even stayed on the phone for half an hour with a staffer who tested positive (again), offering a sympathetic ear and reasonable suggestions to his mock shock. Kits are available at most chain pharmacies, though some stores keep the tests behind the counter. You can also get access to more info by calling 1-800-HIV-TEST.

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