**DEFINITIONS**

**Antibody** – produced by the body’s immune system in response to an outside body that causes disease, such as a virus or bacteria. Antibodies are specific to the particular virus or bacteria.

**Antigen** – the part of a virus or bacteria that the immune system recognises as being an intruder

**Anonymous linked testing** – HIV testing where the results cannot be linked to the person whose blood has been tested, except with the consent of that person. Usually the person uses a false name, a number or code to preserve their identity.

**Anonymous unlinked testing** – HIV testing where the results cannot be linked with the person whose blood has been tested, for example by not putting a name on the sample

**Antiretroviral therapy (ART)** – treatment with drugs that affect the virus itself

**Assay** – a test designed to detect a specific substance, such as antibodies to a virus

**Asymptomatic** – when a person has HIV infection but is well and has no signs or symptoms of HIV-related illness

**Batch testing** – testing a large number of samples at one time

**Compulsory testing** – see ‘Mandatory testing’

**Confidentiality** – when information about a person is not passed on to anyone else other than the person who has been tested

**Confirmatory testing** – when a supplementary test is used to confirm an initial positive diagnosis of HIV infection

**Discordant couples** – couples where one person is HIV-positive and the other is HIV-negative

**Enzyme linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA)** – test that detects antibodies, such as HIV

**False negative** – a negative test result when the blood sample is infected with HIV

**False positive** – a positive test result when the blood sample is not infected with HIV

**Immune system** – the body’s defence system against attack from viruses, bacteria and other harmful organisms

**Incidence** – the number of new infections per year in a given population

**Informed consent** – when a person agrees voluntarily to be tested after they have fully understood what the test involves and what the result may mean

**Mandatory testing** – when a person is tested without being given a choice

**Opportunistic infections** – common infections in people whose immune system is damaged, that do not usually affect people with a healthy immune system

**Polymerase chain reaction (PCR)** – a test that can detect the viral genetic material of HIV

**Prevalence** – the percentage of a population that has a particular disease at a particular point in time

**Prophylaxis** – measures taken to prevent a disease or illness

**Rapid assays or tests** – HIV tests that can be performed in less than 10 minutes

**Reagent** – an agent capable of producing a chemical reaction

**Routine testing** – where people are tested as a matter of course, sometimes without their knowledge, unless they specifically refuse testing

**Screening** – systematic testing of particular groups of people, or of donated blood, tissue and organs before use in transfusions or transplants

**Sensitivity** – the likelihood (expressed as a percentage) that a test result will be positive when antibodies to HIV are present

**Seronegative** – when a blood sample has been tested for HIV and shows no antibodies to HIV

**Seropositive** – when a blood sample has been tested for HIV, and the result has been confirmed, and shows antibodies to HIV

**Seroprevalence** – the percentage of a population infected with HIV

**Serostatus (HIV status)** – the status of a person’s blood – whether the blood has antibodies to HIV (seropositive) or not (seronegative)

**Serum** – the part of the blood that contains antibodies

**Simple assays or tests** – HIV tests that can be performed in 30 minutes to 2 hours

**Specificity** – the likelihood (expressed as a percentage) that a test result will be negative if HIV antibodies are not present

**Supplementary test** – a test used to confirm an initial positive diagnosis of HIV infection

**Surveillance** – anonymous unlinked testing of specific groups of people to detect levels of HIV infection in a population. Surveillance is normally used to identify trends in the epidemic and to plan allocation of resources.

**Testing** – refers in this publication to testing for HIV

**Viral culture** – a test that detects the virus itself, by trying to culture (grow) the virus from a blood sample

**Voluntary testing** – HIV testing of a person who has given informed consent

**Western blot** – a type of supplementary test used to confirm a diagnosis of HIV, usually when the results of screening are indeterminate (unclear)

**Window period** – the time between a person being infected with HIV and their body producing enough HIV antibodies for a test to detect