



## Health Advisory: Take Me Home Self-Collection Kits for HIV, STIs, and HCV Available to Alameda County Residents

January 4, 2023

### Purpose

To inform healthcare providers of the [Take Me Home](#) self-testing program for STIs, HIV, and HCV.

### Background

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed and increased disparities in healthcare including access to testing for HIV, STIs, and HCV (1-3). In 2020 in Alameda County, African Americans and Hispanic/Latinx were disproportionately diagnosed with HIV at 31.8% and 34.4% respectively compared with 17.2% White (4). Nationally, an estimated 15% of people living with HIV are undiagnosed and account for 38% of HIV transmissions (5). HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is a safe and effective method to prevent HIV (6). In 2021, 2,081 Alameda County residents were taking PrEP (4). In 2019, over 14,000 Alameda County residents were diagnosed with an STI (7), which means an estimated 12,000 more residents could benefit from PrEP for the recent STI indication alone.

Healthcare providers have a primary role in counseling and testing for HIV, STIs, and HCV; self-testing augments the support for equitable and private access to testing. At-home self-specimen collection is an important and innovative tool to reduce barriers and increase testing among those at increased risk (8).

### Take Me Home

Alameda County Public Health Department (ACPHD) is one of 26 settings participating in the Take Me Home program to increase the availability of self-testing. This program offers both OraQuick In-Home HIV tests, an oral fluid test for HIV, and self-specimen collection kits that can include a blood collection card, oral and anal swabs, and a collection tube for urine. The kits are mailed back to a centralized laboratory and based on the participant's preference and medical history the specimens can be tested for HIV, syphilis, HCV, gonorrhea, and chlamydia.

To be eligible, participants must be an Alameda County resident, at least 17 years of age, and self-report that they have either never tested for HIV or STIs or their last test was more than a year ago. Kits are ordered by visiting [Take Me Home](#). All information is confidential and protected. The results from the lab-processed specimens are returned between 1-6 days after the specimens arrive at the laboratory.

If the results of a lab-processed specimen are positive, ACPHD staff may refer participants back to their providers or to another provider for treatment or care, as needed. Take Me Home participants may



bring the results to their provider for treatment or follow-up as clinically indicated. ACPHD will recommend pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) as an option to prevent HIV to all participants that receive a negative HIV result.

### Healthcare Providers Should:

- Participate in the Take Me Home by sharing the [link](#) with patients. Providers can request promotional materials/fliers [here](#).
- Counsel HIV-negative patients diagnosed with a bacterial STI in the past six months about PrEP. Patients who request PrEP should be prescribed it even if a provider perceives the patient as low risk of acquiring HIV.
  - PrEP workflows are [here](#) and patient-facing PrEP materials from the CDC can be found [here](#).
- Follow the HIV and STI prevention and treatment guidelines as outlined by the CDC in their [Sexually Transmitted Infections Treatment Guidelines, 2021](#).

### References

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