Why am I having an HIV test today?

What is HIV?
Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is a virus which weakens the body’s immune system, its defence against diseases. Without treatment, people with HIV are at greater risk of certain infections and cancers and can have a reduced life expectancy.

Why am I being offered an HIV test today?
• Lambeth and Southwark have the highest levels of HIV in the UK.
• About 1 in 10 people living in London with HIV do not know they have the virus.
• There is no reason why people in the UK should get sick or die from HIV.
• One of the most common reasons why they do is because they do not know they have HIV.
• Anyone can have HIV.

Can HIV be treated?
• There is no cure for HIV but with the right treatment, people with the virus can have a normal life expectancy.
• The right treatment also prevents HIV from being passed to someone else, such as through sex.
What happens next?
• If you are having a blood test today, we will usually take an extra sample for a HIV test.
• If you do not want a HIV test, please let the person taking your blood know.
• If you have any questions, ask the doctor or nurse caring for you.

What if I already know I have HIV?
Please let the person taking your blood know, so we do not repeat your test.

What happens to my results?
• If your HIV test comes back positive, the Results Team will contact you and explain what happens next.
• We will usually contact you within a week of your test. If we cannot get through, we may send you a letter.
• Occasionally if we cannot contact you, we may contact your GP.
• Please help us by making sure we have your most up-to-date contact details.

If you do not contact me, does that mean my HIV test was negative?
• If we do not contact you, it usually means your test was negative (i.e. you do not have HIV).
• Sometimes we are unable to test the blood we take from you due to a technical reason.
• If you want to know whether your blood was tested or to confirm your test was negative, please call the Results Team, tel 020 3299 3759.

If you have any concerns, call the Results Team on 020 3299 3759 or speak to one of your healthcare staff or your GP.