

Dear Florence

I am sorry you are in this situation, but it's good that you are thinking about having an HIV test. This may be one of the bravest decisions you make in your life – and the wisest. It's better to know than to live in fear.

When you are tested (at a New Start Centre, for example) well-trained counsellors will talk to you before and after the test, answer your questions and help you deal with your results, whatever they are. You don't have to give your name and everything you say is secret.

A nurse will prick your finger to take a little blood. You usually get the result on the same day. The test is reliable but there is a 'window period' – if you were infected less than three months ago, it may not show. So, if you tested negative but had unprotected sex in the last three months, you will need a second test a few months later.

Please encourage your boyfriend to go for an HIV test. If he won't go and won't wear a condom, you have a difficult decision to make.

If you test negative, make sure you stay negative and never have this worry again.

Good luck to you and your boyfriend.

Auntie Stella

ACTION POINTS

- If Florence goes for an HIV test and finds out she is HIV negative, what advice would you give her on how to stay HIV free? What support would she need?
- Make two lists:
 - a Why people don't want to know their HIV status.
 - b Why it's important to be tested to find out if you are HIV positive or negative.

Which list is longer? What advice would you give someone who is thinking about having a test?

- Find out where your nearest Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) centre is – maybe a New Start centre or a clinic. Find out if it's free or how much you have to pay. Is there any age limit for people to be tested?
- Have you ever had sex without a condom? If you have, think about going to a VCT centre to be tested. What support do you need to get the courage to do this? Help each other where you can.
- **ROLEPLAY:** Two people pretend to be Florence and her boyfriend. Act out the conversation when she tells him about her worries and asks him to come with her to be tested. What happens in your roleplay?

If the boyfriend doesn't agree, discuss how Florence can convince him better.
- See Card 26 for information on how to live positively.