

False-positive: When a person is not infected with HIV but receives a positive test result. The specificity of HIV testing is approximately 99.5%. Meaning that if 1,000 uninfected people are tested, around 5 people (0.5%) will have a false positive result.

**However, note that a diagnosis of HIV is never made on the basis of a single test result.**

Causes of false-positive tests:

- Technical issues: specimen mix-up, mislabelling, improper handling, and misinterpretation of a visually read rapid test result
- Biological causes: participation in an HIV vaccine study, autoimmune disorders

Additional testing should be done to distinguish true positive from false positive. See the resource, “FDA-Approved Test Methods Applicable to the HIV Diagnostic Testing Algorithm for Laboratories” for additional information on the HIV testing algorithm.