

3 HIV Testing and Counseling

Goal:

This module will describe 2 different types of HIV tests and present the principles of HIV counseling.

Objectives:

At the end of this module participants will be able to:

1. Understand the goal and characteristics of HIV test counseling
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What is HIV Testing?

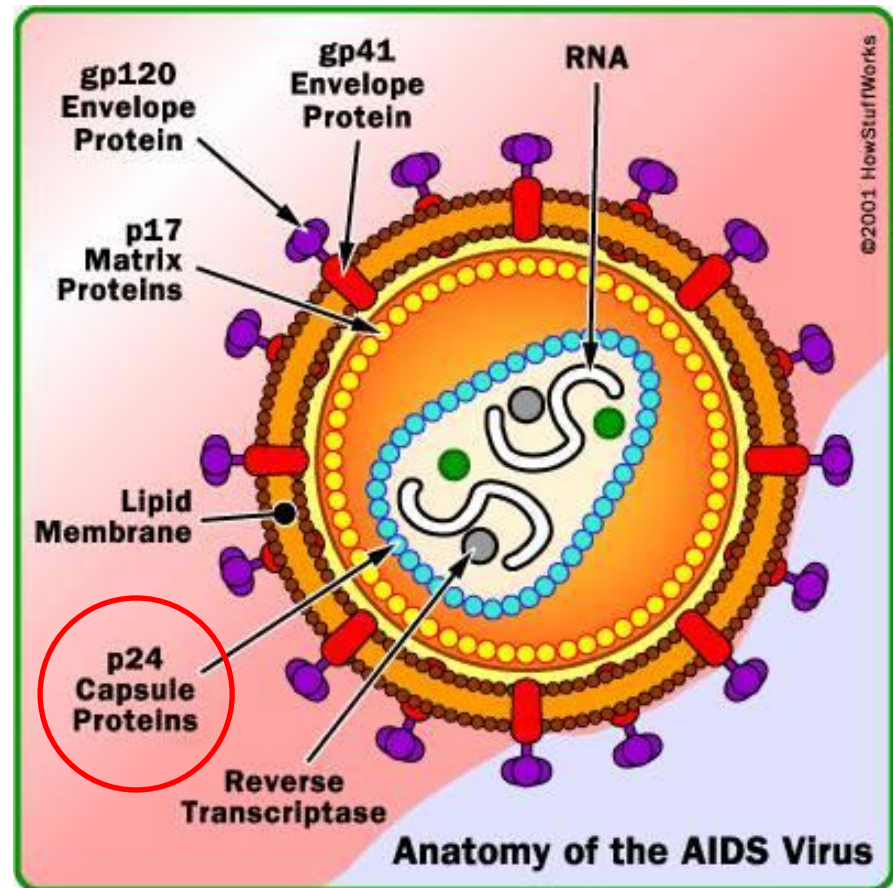
- HIV testing is a health tool people use to find out if they are infected with the virus that can cause a condition called AIDS
- Conventional HIV tests are designed to detect HIV antibodies. Other more specific tests can detect antigens*, or even the virus itself



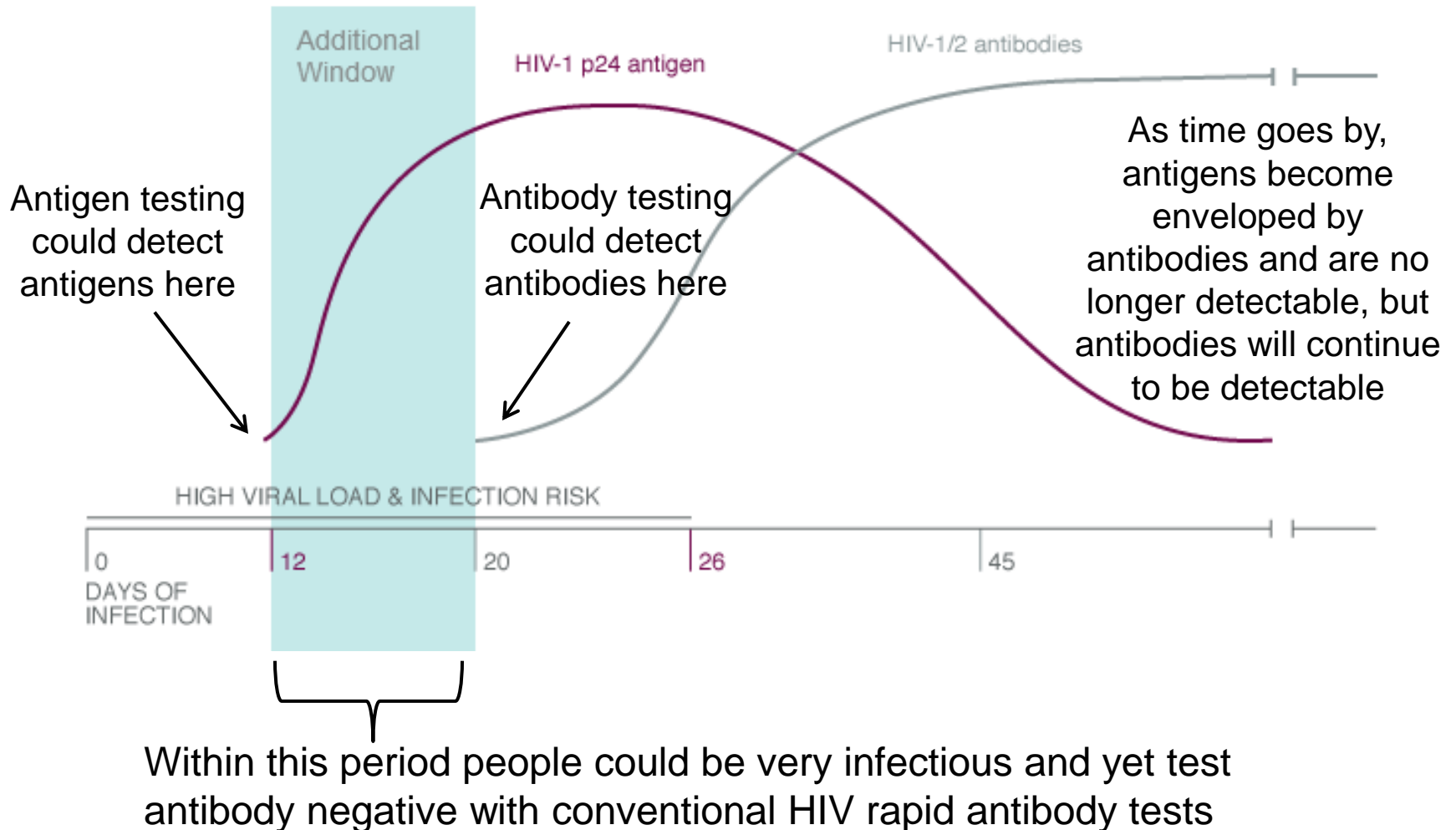
*A pathogen that stimulates the production of an antibody when introduced into the body. Antigens include toxins, bacteria, viruses, and other foreign substances.

Antigens & Testing

- Antigens - pathogens or parts of a pathogen (virus, bacteria, fungi and parasites) that cause the body to produce antibodies
- One HIV antigen is a protein called p24 which is found in the core structure of the human immunodeficiency virus
- Conventional HIV rapid tests are designed to detect HIV antibodies
- New antigen rapid tests can detect the p24 antigen

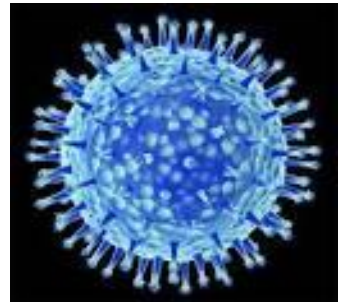


Testing – Antigen & Antibody



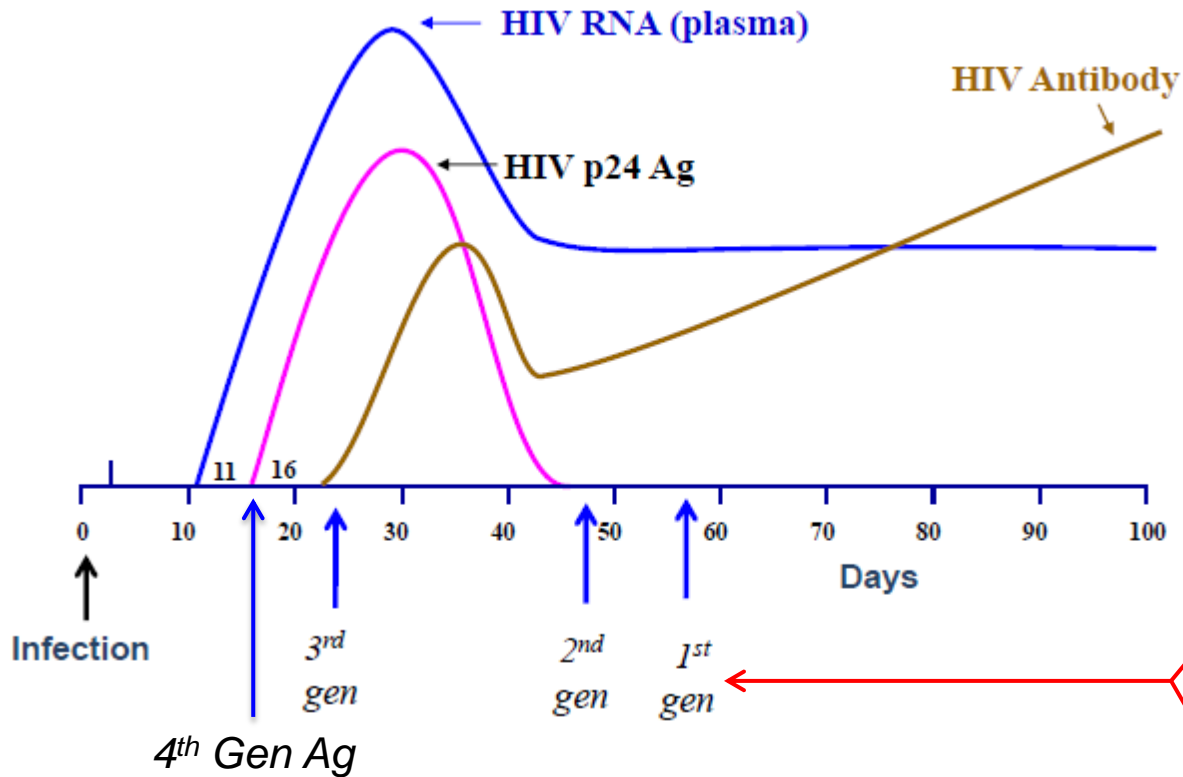
Testing – Antigen & Antibody

- Antigens are detectable within approximately the first 6 weeks of a new infection, possibly as soon as 12 days (see next slide)
- Antigen testing can detect acute infections (a time when people could be most infectious) sooner than antibody testing
- Antibody testing detects chronic infections after the presence of antigens are no longer detectable
- Antigen testing will not detect infections in “late testers” (people who develop AIDS within a year of testing positive for HIV) or in people who test more than 6 or 7 weeks after becoming infected



HIV Infection Detection

Appearance of markers for HIV infection vary over time



- **Viral RNA is first detectable marker**
- **4th generation P24 Antigen (Ag) rapid test is second**
- **3rd generation antibody rapid test is third**

The 1st and 2nd generation antibody laboratory tests of years ago would take a matter of months before detecting antibodies

What Is Counseling

- Counseling is a two-way communication process that helps individuals:
 - Examine personal issues
 - Make decisions
 - Make plans for taking action
- In HIV counseling and testing the focus is to help clients come up with ways to reduce their exposure to HIV/STIs



HIV Counseling Involves

- Active listening
- Being client focused
- Maintaining confidentiality
- Asking questions
- Supporting clients in making their own decisions
- Helping clients find other services they may need



HIV Counseling is Not

- Advising clients what to do
- Criticizing clients
- Forcing ideas or values on clients
- Fixing anything for the client
- Internalizing clients' resistance or ambivalence to change

The purpose of counseling is to help clients come up with their own plans for reducing risk. As a counselor we can give some queues regarding the possible pros and cons to a decision, but we are not to give advice, pass judgment, or force our ideas as to what we believe the client should decide.

People are the experts in regard to their lives!
