Pros and Cons of HIV Testing

Deciding to be tested is not easy; there are many issues to be considered. For some, the anxiety of waiting for results is overwhelming, and the consequences of being tested can be devastating. Each person must decide whether or not testing is in their best interest. It is the role of the counselor to help patients understand both the benefits and drawbacks to testing so they can make an informed decision.

Reasons Why a Person Might Choose To Be Tested:

- To reduce anxiety and concerns over one's own health
- To obtain information about AIDS and risk reduction
- To help reinforce and sustain behavior change once it is initiated
- To assist in making marriage or family planning decisions
- To provide information for medical treatment
- To assist in decision to begin early or experimental treatment
- To inform partners of their possible exposure

Reasons Why a Person Might Choose Not To Be Tested:

- Psychological trauma
- Loss of job, home, insurance
- Fear of social isolation
- Fear of discrimination
- Inability to cope with a positive test result

The small body of evidence that we have suggests that antibody test results are extremely difficult for an individual to deal with. One conclusion seems clear: if a patient is to use the antibody test for making behavior changes, it will be through the provision of effective, supportive counseling.