MONDAY MAY 15 1995

New test for

HIV approved

By SHACKlE TAUHO

Samples of saliva and other oral fluids can now be used to detect the presence of Human Immuno defiiciey Virus (HIV), the virus that causes Aids, a medical scientific journal says.

The African Journal for Medical practice says the Food and Drug Administration of the United States has announced it has approved the first US HIV test system using oral fluids samples. Until now,

HIV tests have used blood sample,

The disclosure will be of major interest to developing countries where the cost of HIV test is proving: prohibitive in terms of equipment and maintenance costs.

Local HIV tests are currently done using Enzyme Linked

Immunosorbent Assay (ELISA)

Tests or Rapid Assay test approved by the Ministry of Health, on blood samples obtained from patients for diagnosis or from samples of donated blood before it is transfused. HIV test reagents are obtained from manufacturers abroad based on the World Health Organisation approved standards.

Although the journal says the

new *test* is not as accurate as the approved HIV tests using blood studies indicate that fur every

100 people infected with HIV, the oral HIVtest will miss only one or two.

The FDA has also approved both a product for collecting specimens of oral fluid and a specific test used to analyse the specimens for the presence of HIV. However, the use of the specimen collection product is subject to several restrictions.

The restriction are to availability for purchase and distribution only through physicians, proper training of individuals administering it, and it must not be provided to people for home use.

Other restrictions are that the test system may be used for diagnosis

Only and must not be used to screen blood donors.

The test system is intended for use in people over 13 years of age, and includes a specially treated cotton pad on a stick and preservative solution in a plastic container.

A trained collector instructs a person to place the pad between the lower gum and the cheek to, obtain a sample of oral fluid. The

pad is then stored in the preservative until the sample is processed and analysed using an

ELISA test specifically licensed for testing oral samples.