

June, 2015 • Members

HIV

Still an Epidemic

We are now more than 30 years into the HIV epidemic. More people are getting tested, so HIV is being diagnosed earlier. People are also getting treated earlier. This and better treatments are helping people to live longer with HIV. That means more people are living with HIV. This trend is expected to continue.

There are many ways that people can avoid HIV infection. But not enough people have gotten the message. And so the epidemic goes on.

HIV testing is the first critical step to turn the tide.

HIV testing: a crucial step in the fight against HIV

There are many good reasons for people to get an HIV test. One of the most important is that about 1 in 7 infected people don't know they are infected.¹ This is a serious problem for 2 reasons. First, people who don't know they are infected might be spreading the infection without knowing it. But if they knew, they could be taking steps to protect their sex partners. Second, they are not getting treated. Treatment helps them live a longer and healthier life. It does this by lowering the amount of virus in the body. This in turn lowers the chance they will infect someone else. So, it all begins with testing.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says everyone between the ages of 13 and 64 should get tested for HIV at least once.² And people at higher risk for HIV should get tested every year.² This includes:

- Men who have sex with men
- People with more than one sex partner
- People with other sexually transmitted diseases
- People who inject drugs

These people should also be tested:

- Women who are planning to become pregnant
- Women who are pregnant
- People who have been sexually assaulted



June 27th is annual HIV testing day

This day is all about education and encouraging people to get an HIV test. These 2 things can help people protect their health. It's a day to find out about:

- An online locator for HIV testing sites
- HIV social media and blog sites
- Educational materials
- Community resources

This information can be accessed at: aids.gov/news-and-events/awareness-days/hiv-testing-day/

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The fourth-generation HIV test

In 2014, the CDC recommended a new way to test for HIV. It's called the fourth-generation test. It uses a blood sample, just like the older test. But it can detect HIV earlier.³ People with HIV are very infectious in the early stage of infection. That means they can easily pass the infection to their sex partner. Detecting HIV in the early stage allows treatment in this stage. That will reduce the amount of virus and lower the chance of passing it on. So testing with the fourth-generation test can help slow the HIV epidemic.

Too many people don't get tested

Almost half of adults in the United States have never had an HIV test.⁴ Some of the reasons people might not want to get tested are:

- They don't believe they are at risk for HIV.
- They don't believe that having HIV is a big deal anymore.
- They are afraid they will test positive.
- They worry that other people may find out if they test positive. They don't realize that testing is confidential.

Protect yourself

- Get tested for HIV.
- Get tested at least once a year if you are at high risk of getting HIV.
- Use a condom every time you have sex.
- Limit your number of sex partners.
- Get checked for other sexually transmitted diseases. These can increase your risk of getting HIV and of passing it to someone else.
- Get medical care and treatment as soon as possible if you have HIV. You will stay healthier longer and lower your risk of passing it to others.
- Use only new, sterile needles and syringes if you inject drugs.

HIV and the Affordable Care Act

Under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), most new health insurance plans must cover HIV testing for everyone 15 to 65 years of age.⁵ They must also cover HIV testing for people of other ages who are at increased risk. The cost must be covered without copays or deductibles.

Additional information

You can find more information about HIV at these Web sites:

- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: aids.gov/hiv-aids-basics/
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: cdc.gov/hiv/basics/
- AVERTing HIV and AIDS: avert.org/living-hiv.htm
- Quest Diagnostics: QuestDiagnostics.com/home/patients/tests-a-z/hiv.html

References

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2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC releases revised HIV testing recommendations in healthcare settings. cdc.gov/hiv/pdf/testing_factsheet_healthcare.pdf. Published September 2006. Accessed April 9, 2015.
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Laboratory testing for the diagnosis of HIV infection. Updated Recommendations. cdc.gov/hiv/pdf/HIVtestingAlgorithmRecommendation-Final.pdf. Published June 27, 2014. Accessed April 9, 2015.
4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. HIV prevention: progress to date. cdc.gov/nchhstp/newsroom/docs/hivfactsheets/progress-508.pdf. Published August 2013. Accessed April 13, 2015.
5. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The affordable care act and HIV/AIDS. aids.gov/federal-resources/policies/health-care-reform/. Updated March 6, 2015. Accessed April 9, 2015.