



Department of Health
Agency of Human Services



Health Department Recognizes World AIDS Day in Vermont



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BURLINGTON – On December 1 – World AIDS Day – the Vermont Department of Health is reminding Vermonters that early diagnosis and linkage to medical treatment are essential for people living with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

Patients who stay engaged in their HIV treatment stand the best chance of lowering the amount of virus they carry (viral load). People with HIV who have viral loads that are undetectable improve their health outcomes and reduce the risk of transmitting the virus.

“In Vermont we’re proud of our work to help people with HIV move through this continuum of care,” said Patsy Kelso PhD, state epidemiologist for infectious disease. “Our latest data indicates that 62 percent of people with HIV in our state are seeing their doctor at least twice a year. Of these, 80 percent have virus that is undetectable.”

Nationally, only about half of HIV patients are seen twice a year. Of these, 77 percent have an undetectable viral load, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Kelso credits strong partnerships among the Health Department, HIV treatment specialists and community-based AIDS Service Organizations for these outcomes. “It shows a deeply shared commitment to help stop the spread of HIV and reduce the impact on our neighbors who are living with the virus now,” she said.

The CDC and Health Department recommend that most people should be tested for HIV with their doctor as part of their routine health care. People at higher risk should get tested every year. People at high risk include injection-drug users and their sex partners, people who exchange sex for money or drugs, sex partners of people who are HIV-infected, and men who have sex with men, or heterosexuals who have had multiple sex partners since their most recent HIV test.

People at high risk who may not be comfortable asking their provider for a test can choose to visit one of nearly 30 testing locations sponsored by the Health Department statewide. These sites provide free anonymous prevention and testing services. The Health Department network sites offer oral fluid testing, HIV risk reduction counseling, and links to support or care services as needed.

For more information, go to 11years.org or gettestedvermont.org or call the Health Department's toll-free AIDS Hotline at 800-882-2437 weekdays 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

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