



Department of Health
Agency of Human Services



Health Department Launches "11 Years" HIV Testing Campaign

For Immediate Release: June 25, 2012

Media Contact: Communication Office
Vermont Department of Health 802-863-7281

BURLINGTON - The Vermont Department of Health has launched a new campaign - www.11years.org - designed to encourage Vermonters to get tested at their own doctor's office or at one of more than 30 free, anonymous testing sites around the state.

"It's time that HIV testing be considered part of routine health screening," said Health Commissioner Harry Chen, MD. "It can take up to 11 years before a person with HIV develops any outward symptoms of AIDS, but early diagnosis can make such a big difference in the health and lives of those who are infected."

Half of all adults in the U.S. have had the test.

The campaign, which includes video, radio, print and online ads along with the website, was developed through months of research with people living in Vermont.

"Early in the process, we identified some important facts about HIV and AIDS that weren't apparent to many of the people interviewed," said Patsy Kelso, state epidemiologist for infectious disease. "That 11-year timeframe was something few people knew about and that's why we decided to make it a centerpiece of our efforts."

The campaign provides information about how the virus affects health, the importance of early diagnosis, and the range of services available to those who test positive. Many of the messages feature real Vermonters, including local medical providers who talk about the lag time between infection and symptoms.

HIV attacks the immune system and gradually disables it over a long period of time. Early diagnosis of HIV infection can prevent AIDS, a syndrome marked by susceptibility to a spectrum of serious diseases. Access to treatment can greatly improve health outcomes for people living with the virus.

"Ask your medical provider for the test," says Kelso.

Most health insurance plans will cover a test for HIV. The Health Department also provides information on its network of free and anonymous testing sites for people who may be at higher risk and not comfortable asking their doctor.

People who test with their medical provider can have a blood test or an oral fluid (swab) test. The Health Department sponsored sites offer oral testing only.

HIV is spread primarily through unprotected sex and sharing needles and syringes. Consistent and correct use of condoms can greatly reduce the risk of sexual transmission. Never sharing syringes interrupts transmission of the virus. A mother with HIV can pass the virus to her baby, although early diagnosis and medical care can greatly reduce this risk. The Health Department recommends that all pregnant women seek prenatal care and ask their medical provider for the HIV test.

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

Follow us on [Twitter](#), join us on [Facebook](#), and visit healthvermont.gov for health information, news, and updates.

###

Vermont Department of Health | 108 Cherry Street | Burlington, VT 05402
Voice: 802-863-7200 | In Vermont 800-464-4343 | Fax: 802-865-7754 | TTY/TDD: Dial 711 first
Health Care Provider Infectious Disease Reporting: 802-863-7240 or 800-640-4374

