



Department of Health  
Agency of Human Services



## Health Commissioner and State Epidemiologist Tested for HIV

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The ease, convenience and importance of getting tested for HIV was highlighted during a press briefing Tuesday afternoon at the Vermont Department of Health.

Deborah Kutzko APRN, of the Comprehensive Care Clinic at Fletcher Allen Health Care, took a blood sample from Health Commissioner Harry Chen, MD and an oral fluid (swab) test from Patsy Kelso, state epidemiologist for infectious disease. Test results will be available in two weeks.

All test results are confidential and shared only between a health care provider and patient.

“Nearly everyone should be tested for HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, and testing should now be a routine part of health care,” said Dr. Chen. “There are many ways to get the test – ask your doctor or, if that’s not comfortable for you, the Health Department offers free, anonymous testing at more than 30 sites statewide.”

It takes 11 years on average for a person who is infected with HIV to have symptoms of disease. Early diagnosis of HIV infection can prevent or slow the development of AIDS. Access to treatment can lower the impact of the virus on a person’s immune system and can greatly improve health outcomes. Early diagnosis of HIV infection can help to prevent the secondary transmission of the disease.

That’s why the Health Department launched a new campaign this month - [www.11years.org](http://www.11years.org) - that includes video, radio, print and online ads. The campaign provides information about where to get tested, how the virus affects health, the importance of early diagnosis, and the range of services available to those who test positive.

Deborah Kutzko, an infectious disease nurse practitioner who has been involved in HIV/AIDS prevention and care for more than 25 years, is one of the many Vermont health care providers featured in the ‘11 years’ campaign.

For more information, go to [www.11years.org](http://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.

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