



Department of Health
Agency of Human Services



Health Department Recognizes World AIDS Day

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BURLINGTON - The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that approximately 100 Vermonters living with HIV are unaware of their infection.

The Vermont Department of Health encourages everyone to get tested for HIV as part of the global effort to raise HIV/AIDS awareness on World AIDS Day (December 1, 2012).

“Once someone knows that they have HIV, they can be linked with medical care,” said Patsy Kelso, state epidemiologist for infectious disease. “HIV medications can suppress viral activity, protect the immune system and may reduce new infections. These benefits are most effective when treatment is started early.”

Testing is available through your healthcare provider. People who are uncomfortable asking their medical provider for a test can access free, anonymous testing through a Health Department certified Counseling, Testing and Referral site.

Information on free, anonymous HIV testing can be found online at: <http://11years.org> and at <http://gettestedvermont.com>.

People can live with the virus for more than 10 years with no outward signs or symptoms. From the time of infection, HIV actively attacks the body’s immune system. Without medical intervention, HIV can lead to AIDS, a syndrome of severe immune suppression and illness.

The Health Department works with community-based organizations to help people living with the virus stay in medical care and adhere to drug therapies. Key partners in care and support services include Vermont CARES, AIDS Project of Southern Vermont, the HIV/HCV Resource Network, the Comprehensive Care Clinics, Twin States Network and the Vermont People with AIDS Coalition.

HIV is spread primarily through sex and syringe sharing. A mother with HIV can pass the virus to her baby during pregnancy, birth or breastfeeding. Women who are considering pregnancy, or who are pregnant, are encouraged to ask their healthcare provider about HIV testing.

For information on HIV support, care, testing or prevention programs, call toll-free within Vermont 800-882-AIDS (800-882-2437), Monday – Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

You can also visit healthvermont.gov.

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