

Dept. of Health Services: Promotes awareness on National HIV Testing Day

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Medical advances mean people diagnosed with HIV can now live long, healthy lives

Today is National HIV Testing Day and the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) is taking this opportunity to share information about medical advances that allow those diagnosed with HIV to live long, healthy, happy lives.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), many people living with HIV who seek appropriate treatment are able to maintain an undetectable viral load, which means they can live without fear of passing HIV on to others, but the first step is getting tested. Nearly eight in 10 people living with HIV in the United States reported feeling stigmatized for their HIV status, while nearly two out of three say it is difficult to tell others about their infection. Addressing HIV stigma is central to ending the HIV epidemic because when people experience stigma, they are less likely to access HIV testing, adopt safe behaviors, or be adherent to their HIV medication.

“With advances in medicine and the dedicated work of our community partners, the goal of ending new HIV transmissions in Wisconsin is within reach,” said Karen McKeown, State Health Officer. “We want people to know the facts about HIV so that together we can reduce fear and stigma and help people stay healthy.”

DHS would like to share the following facts and resources with the public:

Free or low cost HIV testing. Getting tested is the first step, and DHS sponsors HIV testing at numerous agencies across the state. Testing is confidential and only takes 20 minutes and a finger stick. [Find a list of places to get free or low-cost HIV testing in Wisconsin.](#) Select Walgreens locations in Milwaukee are also offering free, confidential HIV testing that takes one minute to perform. Learn more at GetTestedMKE.org.

Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP). With only one pill a day, people who are HIV negative and at high risk can reduce their risk of becoming HIV positive by up to 92%. The medication is available by prescription from your primary care physician or infectious disease physician. [Learn more about PrEP.](#)

Undetectable = Untransmittable (U=U). In 2017, studies showed that people living with HIV who were able to maintain an undetectable viral load through antiretroviral medication (ARVs) did not pass on HIV through sex. This means that people living with HIV who are able to stay in treatment can live without fear of passing HIV on to others through sex. [Learn more on the CDC website.](#)

As part of its work to reduce HIV-related stigma, DHS will be launching a media campaign, "HIV In Real Life", which will run in Milwaukee County starting on July 9, 2018. The campaign features Milwaukee community members who share their stories about staying healthy while living with HIV, staying HIV negative, and the stigma they encountered in their lives because of their diagnosis.