

June 12, 2018

MCHD to mark National HIV Testing Day with event

MOBILE, Alabama — Testing is the only way to know for sure if someone has Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). It weakens a person’s immune system by destroying important cells that fight disease and infection. No effective cure exists for HIV.



According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), one in six of the estimated 1.2 million people living in the United States with HIV are unaware of their status. That means they are not getting the medical care they need to stay healthy and to avoid passing HIV to others.

Wednesday, June 27, is designated as National HIV Testing Day to encourage people to learn their HIV status. The 2018 theme is “Doing It My Way, Testing for HIV.”

The CDC recommends that everyone between the ages of 13 and 64 get tested for HIV at least once as part of routine health care. People with certain risk factors should get tested more often.

In the lead up to National HIV Testing Day, the Mobile County Health Department is teaming with Walgreens and Greater Than AIDS — a leading national public information response to the domestic HIV/AIDS epidemic — to encourage community members to know their HIV status and take advantage of free HIV testing and counseling about new prevention strategies, including Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP), a daily pill that reduces the risk of HIV transmission. A major partner with MCHD for this project will include AIDS Alabama South.

Testing will be at the Walgreens store at 2050 Government Street in Mobile on Wednesday, June 27, from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.

“It is our fifth year to participate in this annual National HIV Testing Day Event with Walgreen’s and Greater Than AIDS,” said Diane Glass, R.N., the HIV Mobile District Manager. “We will be providing free HIV testing using the Ora-Quick Rapid Anti-body oral mouth swab test. They will receive the results in 20 minutes.”

National HIV Testing Day is a reminder to get the facts, get tested and get involved to take care of yourself and your partners. In addition to the estimated 1.2 million people in the United States now living with HIV, that number grows by almost 50,000 every year.

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“Unprotected sex is the No. 1 mode of transmission for HIV and you could be infected with HIV and not know it if you have never been tested,” Glass said. She added it is no longer a death sentence if people:

- 1) Get tested to find out their status,
- 2) If positive for the virus, get into care,
- 3) Take the medication prescribed every day for the rest of their lives.

The goal of the treatment is to get their viral load down to an undetectable level. The results of that are:

- 1) They will be healthy,
- 2) They can live a long life,
- 3) The chances of them spreading the disease in the community are extremely low (3 percent).

“Only about half of the people living in Mobile County that have been diagnosed with HIV have an undetectable viral load,” Glass said. “Also, there are people infected with HIV and don’t know it, because they have never been tested. These are two groups of people spreading the disease in the community.”

CDC has found that more than 90 percent of new HIV infections in the United States could be prevented by testing and diagnosing people who have HIV and ensuring they receive prompt, ongoing care and treatment. Early linkage to and retention in HIV care is central to managing HIV and promoting health among all people living with HIV. Medicines can keep people with HIV healthy for many years, and greatly reduce the chance of transmitting HIV to their sex partners.

Even if you don’t feel sick, getting early treatment for HIV is important. Early treatment can help you live a longer, healthier life. Treatment can also make it less likely that you will pass HIV on to other people.

For more information, call MCHD at 251-690-8167, or visit www.greaterthan.org/Walgreens or www.hiv.gov.