

June 26, 2020

## HOPWA In Focus: National HIV Testing Day 2020

Testing Day (NHTD) is Saturday, June 27th. Reflecting on past NHTDs where in-person testing events brought us together, this occasion is yet another reminder of how our daily lives have changed in a few short months. There are so many challenges confronting our nation right now. As part of a community working to end the HIV epidemic, we are unfortunately already well acquainted with working to overcome challenging issues related health and racial disparities. We already know how hard it is to have positive health outcomes without stable housing, and as we heed the call to shelter-in-place to prevent further spread of COVID-19, safe stable housing becomes even more important. We know that [Black/African American communities are disproportionately impacted by HIV](#) and accounted for [57% of HOPWA beneficiaries last year](#). As our nation strives for racial justice, it is clearer than ever that equal access to housing and healthcare are vital.

This year's NHTD theme is "Knowing" – knowing your [testing](#) options, knowing your [risk](#), knowing your [prevention options](#) (including [Ready, Set, PrEP](#)), knowing about [treatment](#) options, knowing [housing is healthcare](#), and knowing that together we can [end the HIV epidemic](#).

In 2018, 37,968 people received an HIV diagnosis in the United States. Currently 1.2 million people in the U.S. are living with HIV. These numbers do not include the approximately 1 in 7 people living with HIV who do not know their status. It is important, even in the midst of a global pandemic, to get as many people tested for HIV as possible with the goal of [Ending the HIV Epidemic](#).

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends HIV Tests for the following populations:

- Everyone between the ages of 13 and 64 should get tested for HIV at least once as part of routine healthcare.
- Those with certain ongoing risk factors—such as having more than one sex partner since their last HIV test or having sex with someone whose sexual history is unknown—should get tested at least annually. Some sexually active gay and bisexual men may benefit from more frequent testing (e.g., every 3 to 6 months). The CDC's updated [HIV Risk Reduction Tool](#) can help further identify risks for getting or transmitting HIV.
- All pregnant women, as part of proactive prenatal care, should receive certain blood tests to detect infections and other illnesses, such as HIV, syphilis, and Hepatitis B.

Due to COVID-19, it may be difficult to access HIV testing in the usual ways: in a sexually transmitted disease (STD) clinic, from a primary care practitioner, from pharmacists, or at a community-based organization. It is important that we continue to explore ways to provide HIV diagnostic, prevention, and care services. HIV self-testing is a method that can provide HIV diagnostic services. This includes [rapid self-tests and mail-in self-tests](#) as described below.

- A **rapid HIV self-test** allows individuals to take an HIV test with an oral swab and find out the result within minutes in their own home or other private location and access follow-up prevention or care services, as appropriate. HIV self-testing is available for retail purchase by consumers or may be available free or at low cost from health departments or community-based organizations.

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- A **mail-in self-test** includes a specimen collection kit that contains supplies to collect dried blood from a fingerstick at home. The sample is then sent to a lab for testing and the results are provided by a healthcare provider. Mail-in self-tests can be ordered through various online merchant sites. Your healthcare provider can also order a mail-in self-test for you.
- For other testing resources, please see the CDC [HIV Testing website](#).

No matter the method of HIV testing, linkage to care is essential. To find HIV and other services, use the [HIV.gov service locator](#).

The Office of HIV/AIDS Housing encourages you to find ways to participate in this year's NHTD events while continuing to stay safe and healthy during these challenging times. If you are on social media, join us in using the hashtag #HIVTestingDay and communicating that *knowing* about HIV and HIV testing can help end the HIV epidemic.

Respectfully,

*Rita*

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