

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Eau Claire City-County Health Department Observes National HIV Testing Day

Eau Claire, WI, June 22, 2021 – This Sunday, June 27th is National HIV Testing Day. HIV Testing Day is dedicated to reducing stigma surrounding HIV and encouraging people to get tested, which is the first step towards HIV prevention and care.

When HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) was first discovered in the United States in June 1981, there was no effective treatment available, and people who received an HIV diagnosis were often discriminated against by family, friends, and medical providers. Now, 40 years later, advances in HIV prevention, care, and treatment offer hope for a long, healthy life to people who are living with, or at risk for, HIV and AIDS.

In order to stop the spread of HIV, the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) recommends that everyone between the ages of 13 and 64 years be tested for HIV at least once in their lifetimes. Currently, less than 40% of people in the U.S. have ever been tested for HIV. The CDC also recommends people with specific risk factors be screened at least once a year. That includes:

- Men who have sex with men;
- People who inject drugs;
- Anyone who has had more than one sex partner since their last HIV test; and
- People who have been diagnosed with another sexually transmitted infection, hepatitis, or TB (tuberculosis)

If a person tests positive for HIV, it's important to get into treatment right away. Antiretroviral therapy (known as ART) is a highly effective medicine that works by lowering the amount of virus in the body to slow the progression of HIV and help protect the person's immune system. Having an undetectable viral load also helps prevent transmitting the virus to others. If HIV medication is taken as prescribed, a person can live a long, healthy life while being HIV-positive.

People who don't have HIV but are at a higher risk of exposure should talk to their doctor about using PrEP, a once-daily pill that is 99% effective at preventing HIV transmission when used correctly. HIV can also be prevented by using condoms and getting tested regularly for HIV and other STIs like chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis.

The Health Department provides low- or no-cost HIV and other STI tests to anyone who needs one. To schedule your confidential appointment, call (715) 839-6988.

