Out for Delivery: HIV Testing at Home

A new program aims to deliver 1 million free rapid HIV tests.

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Testing yourself for HIV for free is about to get a lot easier, thanks to the largest HIV self-testing program in U.S. history. The Together TakeMeHome program aims to deliver 1 million rapid HIV tests across the country starting in early 2023.

The federal government, via the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), has awarded $8.3 million per year to Together TakeMeHome for its five-year project (for a total of $41.5 million), according to a statement from Emory University, which will oversee the program.

Orders placed on the program's website will be processed by Amazon, which will deliver the tests in discreet packages, according to the press release. OraSure will provide the tests, which will be available in all 50 states, Washington, DC, and Puerto Rico.

Nearly 40% of new HIV cases are transmitted by people unaware of their positive status, according to the CDC, which estimates that about 1.2 million people in the United States are living with HIV, including 158,500 who don't know they have it.

Put another way, about one in eight people with HIV are unaware of their status, according to HIV.gov. "Knowledge of status is the gateway to engaging in prevention or treatment services that enable individuals, regardless of their status, to live a long and healthy life," said Harold J. Phillips, MRP, director of the White House Office of National AIDS Policy, on HIV.gov.

In other words, it's important to know whether you have HIV. If you're positive, then you can take medications—daily pills or long-acting injections—that stop disease progression and reduce your viral load. People living with HIV who have an undetectable viral load not only live longer and healthier lives, they also do not transmit HIV sexually, a fact referred to as Undetectable Equals Untransmittable, or U=U.

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