Knowing All About Your HIV Status [VIDEOS]

National HIV Testing Day is Saturday, June 27. Here's why NHTD is important.

June 26, 2020 By Trent Straube

African Americans are disproportionately affected by HIV. So it's particularly important for members of the population to know their status. For the past 25 years, June 27 has been a day to encourage people to do just that. This year is no different. Saturday marks National HIV Testing Day (NHTD).

To get the word out about this awareness day, Admiral Brett P. Giroir, MD, the assistant secretary for health at the U.S Department of Health and Human Services, recorded a video message, which you can watch below.

"This year's testing day's theme, 'Knowing,' is about 'knowing' your testing options, including self-testing; 'knowing' your risk; 'knowing' your prevention options, including 'Ready, Set, PrEP'; 'knowing' about treatment options; 'knowing' that together we can end the HIV epidemic," he said. "But you can only benefit from 'knowing' if you take the test."

> Tomorrow is National HIV Testing Day. Find a local testing site near you.#HIVTestingDay #StopHIVTogether #NHTDhttps://t.co/AUTCkFsT72
>
> — Sexuality & Health (@SexualityLab) June 26, 2020

Giroir points out that testing is part of a federal initiative titled "Ending the HIV Epidemic: A Plan for America." Launched by President Trump last year, its goal is to lower HIV rates nationwide by 75% in five years and by 90% in 10 years. It aims to achieve this by focusing on four key pillars—diagnose, treat, prevent and respond—and using current HIV data to identify where the virus is spreading in order to deploy resources quickly.

(He doesn't mention, however, whether the administration's efforts to and allow health care discrimination against LGBT people might undermine those goals.)

Anyway… Giroir is indeed correct that it is important to know your HIV status. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), of the estimated 1.2 million people living with HIV in the United States, one in seven (14%) are unaware of their status. About 38,000 people were diagnosed with HIV in 2018.

> June 27th is #HIVTestingDay. Find which #HIV test is best for your lifestyle and situation. When you're #DoingItMyWay, you have important information that can keep you—and others—safe. https://t.co/RzqQltZzWE #NHTD pic.twitter.com/BTisQTm6Fq
>
> — ArmyPublicHealth (@USAPHC) June 26, 2020

Knowing your status is important because if you're positive, you can get on treatment to help you stay healthy longer. What's more, when people with HIV take meds and maintain a suppressed viral load, they can't transmit the virus sexually, even when condoms aren't used. This fact is referred to as undetectable equals untransmittable, or U=U.

To meet the needs of their residents, some counties are offering drive-through HIV testing and free at-home testing kits. For details, see "Unique Ways to Learn Your HIV Status During COVID-19."

Playwright Donja R. LoveCourtesy of Serge Nivelle

You can also mark National HIV Testing Day with some top-rate entertainment in the comfort of your own home thanks to a work by playwright Donja R. Love. That's because you're invited to watch a Zoom reading of his powerful HIV play one in two Saturday, June 27. For details—and to learn what the title refers to—see "UPDATED: Black Men and HIV Take the Virtual Center Stage in 'one in two.'"

National HIV Testing Day is June 27. Share with your friends and loved ones what knowing your HIV status means to you. Your words can empower others to get tested for HIV. If you are unable to make it into our offices, AT HOME TEST KITS AVAILABLE ???? #HIV #NHTD #lgbtq #hhhrc pic.twitter.com/lKi0YhjlCb

— Hawai’i Health & Harm Reduction Center (@hawaiihhrc) June 26, 2020

For more information on testing, read the POZ Basics on HIV Testing. The CDC offers social media resources for NHTD, such as sample tweets and graphics you can share, like the ones embedded in this article. For more, search #HIVTestingDay, #NHTD and #StopHIVTogether on social media.

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