



MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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NATIONAL HIV TESTING DAY: PROMOTING PUBLIC AWARENESS AND PREVENTION

Free and Confidential Testing for Tennessee Residents

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – The Tennessee Department of Health will join health providers and advocates across the country in observing National HIV Testing Day on Saturday, June 27. The goal of this observance is to promote public awareness and prevention of HIV, and the Tennessee Department of Health is encouraging all sexually active Tennesseans to get tested for HIV. TDOH provides free, confidential testing across the state in local county health departments.

Department of Health statistics show the urgent need for raising awareness about HIV. In 2007, there were 1,043 persons who were newly identified with the HIV virus in Tennessee. The largest number of HIV/AIDS cases occurred among persons aged 35-44 years and accounted for 30 percent of all cases diagnosed in 2007. Among those newly diagnosed cases, 74 percent were men and 26 percent were women; 64 percent of the total were African American.

According to estimates from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there are 1,106,400 million HIV-positive individuals nationwide, and one in five of those are unaware that they have HIV. Nationwide, someone is infected with HIV every 49 seconds. TDOH experts note that the virus affects all age groups, and stress the importance of early detection of HIV.

“The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that HIV testing become a routine part of medical care” says Carolyn Wester, MD, MPH, medical director of the state’s HIV/AIDS/STD section. “The earlier people know their status, the quicker they can begin treatment, which leads to longer and healthier lives. Without treatment, the HIV infection can continue to weaken the immune system and will likely progress to AIDS.”

According to statistics from the Tennessee Department of Health, more than 19,000 cases of HIV/AIDS have been diagnosed across the state since 1992. Over this period, an increasing number of cases have been reported among all races and ethnicities, with the sharpest increase among African Americans.

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Various sites across the state will provide free, walk-in HIV testing on Saturday, June 27 for National HIV Testing Day. To find your nearest testing site, visit www.hivtest.org. The Tennessee Department of Health offers free HIV tests throughout the year at county health department locations. Contact information for your local County Health Department can be found online at <http://health.state.tn.us/LocalDepts/index.html>.

To learn more about the HIV/AIDS epidemic and how to protect yourself, visit the Department of Health, HIV/AIDS/STD section Web site at <http://health.state.tn.us/STD/std.htm>. Questions about HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases can also be answered by calling the HIV/AIDS/STD Hotline at 1-800-525-2437.

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