
Tuesday 17 November, 2016

HIV TESTING THE KEY TO ENDING TRANSMISSION

One in six people diagnosed with HIV in NSW report heterosexual exposure, and at least 10 per cent of people with HIV don't know they have the virus and could unknowingly pass it onto others.

The South Eastern Sydney Local Health District hopes the surprising statistics will prompt more people to get tested for HIV.

Professor Julian Gold, Director, Albion Street Centre, said once a person is diagnosed, they can start treatment, improve their health outcome and prevent the virus from being passed onto others.

"A person with HIV who is on treatment in 2016 can expect a near-normal life expectancy and to live a healthy life," Professor Gold said.

In the week leading up to *World AIDS Day* on December 1, health professionals across NSW are encouraging people 'at risk' of HIV to be tested.

NSW Health is also encouraging gay and homosexually active men to continue regular testing, as well as encouraging the following groups to get a test:

- Heterosexual men and women with behaviours putting them at risk of HIV e.g. men who identify as heterosexual but who have sex with men; people who inject drugs.
- People from countries where there are high rates of HIV and people who have had unprotected sex while travelling.

"Health professionals now view and treat HIV like any other chronic manageable condition," Professor Gold said.

"It's important for people to know it's never been easier to get tested.

"There's now a mix of high quality, safe and innovative HIV testing services available, with express and drop-in clinics offering faster results, and after-hours service. Plus HIV testing is fast, free and confidential."

HIV facts: Around 10,000 people are currently living in NSW with diagnosed HIV infection. Most new HIV infections reported in 2015 were in homosexually active men (81 per cent) with heterosexual exposure accounting for 15 per cent of all newly reported infections. Almost a third (29 per cent) of people were diagnosed at a late stage of infection.

“Many new HIV infections come from people who do not know that they have HIV. HIV testing is essential to ending HIV transmission in NSW by 2020.

“Sixty-four per cent of HIV diagnoses in NSW in 2015 were made by services other than sexual health clinics. Forty-seven per cent of those diagnoses were made by GPs.”

Peak professional bodies such as the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine and Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Association support the campaign for more HIV testing among a diverse range of patient groups.

HIV testing is available at a range of different health services:

- GPs
- Family Planning Clinics
- Aboriginal Medical Services
- Sexual health clinics
- Community-based rapid HIV testing sites

For confidential information on where to get a HIV test people can call the NSW Sexual Health Infolink on 1800 451 624.

In the lead up to World AIDS Day visit www.health.nsw.gov.au/hiv-test to learn more about HIV testing and living with HIV.

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South Eastern Sydney Local Health District

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