National Transgender HIV Testing Day 2021

Since COVID-19 caused many testing sites to shut down, the CDC is promoting free at-home HIV and STI test kits. Here's how to get yours.

April 16, 2021 By Trent Straube

Sunday, April 18, marks National Transgender HIV Testing Day (#TransHIV) 2021. HIV disproportionately affects the transgender, gender-nonconforming and nonbinary community. This is especially true for transgender women of color who, in 2017 tested HIV positive at three times the national average. So it's important to promote HIV testing.



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This year, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which spearheads the transgender HIV testing day, also highlights the availability of at-home HIV self-testing kits.

They're a vital option, especially since COVID-19 shutdowns have resulted in limited access to clinics that offer HIV tests as well as tests for sexually transmitted infections, such as chlamydia, syphilis and gonorrhea.

Free at-home HIV and STI tests are available at TakeMeHome.org, which the CDC is promoting along with transgender HIV testing awareness. For more details about the tests, see the POZ article "Get Tested for HIV and STIs at Home, for Free." By the way, April is also STD Awareness Month.

From 2017 to 2019, there was a 28% increase in transgender women served by the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program. Learn more about the impact of #HIV on Transgender Women: https://t.co/o3bxIFlzrb pic.twitter.com/z53JeShh6X

— AIDSVu (@AIDSVu) April 16, 2021

Nearly 1 million people identify as transgender in the United States, according to the CDC (about 328 million people live in the country). Adult and adolescent transgender people made up 2% (601) of the new HIV diagnoses in 2018. Regarding HIV data related to the transgender population, HIV.gov and the CDC write:

> Overall, HIV diagnoses increased 9% among transgender people in the U.S. and dependent areas from 2014 to 2018. Increases were seen in many age groups; however, some progress has been made with reducing HIV diagnoses among young transgender people: diagnoses declined 21% among transgender people aged 13 to 24. This progress is a possible sign that targeted prevention efforts are working. However, disparities and health inequities still exist.
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> CDC's NHBS-Trans report [the National HIV Behavior Surveillance] (PDF, 2 MB) found that 42% of transgender women surveyed in seven major U.S. cities have HIV. The report also found racial and ethnic differences in HIV rates among respondents—62% of Black/African-American transgender women and 35% of Hispanic/Latina transgender women surveyed have HIV, compared to 17% of White transgender women. These findings demonstrate the pressing need to scale up HIV prevention strategies and to acknowledge and address the social and economic barriers—such as systemic racism, poverty, stigma, employment circumstances, housing instability, and lack of education—that contribute to health disparities.

> Expanding routine and focused HIV testing (including self-testing) is an important tool to help eliminate disparities and improve health outcomes. Recent findings from the NHBS-Trans report show 82% of transgender women who do not have HIV were tested for HIV in the past year. This high percentage is encouraging, but we want to do more to continue to increase this number. We invite you to join us, in honor of NTHTD, in promoting free HIV self-testing kits for individuals to use or to give to others as part of a demonstration project. The goal is to ensure that people most in need of HIV self-testing kits, including transgender people, can access free self-tests to know their status.

Additional HIV data and analysis can be found on AIDSVu.org, including an interview with the CDC's Division of HIV/AIDS Prevention about how the federal government is improving its data on transgender people—for example, by including gender identity along with sex assigned at birth in its records.

In 2019, young Transgender Women represented the highest percentage of Transgender Women living with #HIV. Read more about HIV among Transgender Women: https://t.co/o3bxIFlzrb pic.twitter.com/7n0YWHE3ZA

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AIDSVu.org also converts the HIV data into sharable graphics. Search for more items online using the hashtags #NTHTD and #TransHIV.

In related news, March 31 marked a global transgender awareness event; for details, see "Watch This Delightful Video to Celebrate Transgender Day of Visibility," which includes the UNAIDS video The Mirror.

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A post shared by Open Aid Alliance (@openaidalliancemt)

Similarly, AIDS United's recent blog post highlighted the recent attacks against transgender people's civil rights and why it's important for Congress to pass the Equality Act, which protects LGBTQ people against discrimination. For more, read, "Why Transgender Equity Is Critical to Ending the HIV Epidemic."

HIV awareness days take place throughout the year. For a list and details, see "2021 HIV/AIDS Awareness Days," which includes a printable PDF. Plus, our December 2019 issue highlighted the 2019 POZ 100, which celebrated transgender, gender-nonconforming and nonbinary advocates.

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