



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Rapid HIV Testing

Rapid HIV Testing in Outreach and Other Community Settings

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[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC – safer, healthier people.

[Matthew Reynolds] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly broadcast of the MMWR, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Matthew Reynolds.

December 1st is World AIDS Day which serves to remind us of the toll that HIV/AIDS continues to take on people's health worldwide. In the United States, an estimated 1 million people are living with HIV, and quarter of them – or approximately 25% – are unaware of their infection and thus at high risk for infecting others. HIV testing remains critical to stopping the spread of HIV in the United States and worldwide.

Here to talk about CDC's HIV prevention efforts, HIV testing, and World AIDS Day activities is Dr. Kevin Fenton, Director of CDC's National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and TB Prevention. Welcome to the show, Dr. Fenton.

[Dr. Fenton] Thank you very much.

[Matthew Reynolds] Dr. Fenton, why is it important to be tested for HIV?

[Dr. Fenton] Well, as you mentioned at the introduction to this talk, we estimate in the United States that there are over 1 million people living with HIV and we know that nearly a quarter of those individuals are unaware of their HIV infection. Therefore, it's absolutely important that people have an HIV test in order to know their status, so that those who are HIV infected can seek early and effective treatment and protect their partners from becoming infected.

[Matthew Reynolds] Can you tell us about the different HIV screening tests available in the United States?

[Dr. Fenton] Absolutely. There are a range of HIV screening tests which are currently available, and this gives individuals much more choice regarding the nature of the test, the timing of the test, and how quickly they can actually get their test results. CDC is particularly excited about the availability of rapid HIV tests which provide the test results within 20 minutes. And, simply this requires either a sample of oral fluid or a pin prick in order to have those test results available within 20 minutes. There are other methods which are available which CDC has been using and promoting over the years, but these provide test results in a much longer time period.

[Matthew Reynolds] Well, given the new HIV rapid test, it sounds like any obstacles that people might think were there to getting an HIV test are now removed so that they could get one conveniently now.

[Dr. Fenton] That's correct. It works in both ways. People are now able to get HIV test results far more easily than they have had in the past. But perhaps more importantly, because the test results are available within such a short timeframe (within 20 minutes) it means that people are able to get their test results right there on the spot. So this means that we have less "loss to follow-up," as it's called, and more people are able to actually know their test results on the day of having taken the test.

[Matthew Reynolds] Who should get tested for HIV?

[Dr. Fenton] Well, we currently recommend that anyone who feels that they may have been at risk of acquiring HIV, either through sexual transmission or through injecting drug use or any of the risk factors for acquiring HIV, they should actually seek an HIV test. In 2006, in addition to this, CDC issued new recommendations calling for routine HIV testing of adults, adolescents, and pregnant women who attend health care settings in the United States. And these recommendations were really geared towards routinizing HIV screening among individuals age 13 to 64 years.

[Matthew Reynolds] Should people ages 13 to 64, the group that you just mentioned, be screened for HIV every time they see their doctor?

[Dr. Fenton] No, the recommendations aren't necessarily calling for the screening to occur every time someone attends their physician, but certainly, if there continues to be risk for acquiring HIV, then the recommendations call for screening at least annually. But for most individuals there may be no risk at all. And, what we are really encouraging is that people are actually aware of their HIV status and if there's any change in risk, then individuals should avail themselves of HIV testing.

[Matthew Reynolds] Well let's shift into the actual test itself. Do you always have to get a test in a doctor's office or in an emergency room?

[Dr. Fenton] No. Those are only two venues where CDC is actually recommending enhanced HIV testing. But the reality is, we can do HIV testing and HIV testing is actually provided in a variety of settings - in community settings, in innovative jurisdictions, such as clubs and bars and social venues and other areas where we have partnerships with our community-based organizations. So there is no real limitation on places where HIV testing can take place, and CDC is currently providing funding to state and local health departments to increase HIV testing to populations in many areas.

[Matthew Reynolds] For our listeners who want to find an HIV testing site, what do you recommend?

[Dr. Fenton] Well, there are a number of sources of information on HIV testing sites. For those who are internet savvy, I would recommend our website which is www.hivtest.org and that provides fantastic information on local HIV testing sites and you're able to actually enter your zip code and get the nearest sites which are within 5, 10, or 20 miles of your home. For those who may not have access to the internet, you can also get information on your HIV testing sites by calling 1-800-CDC-INFO or 1-800-232-4636 and this is a 24-hour availability number. So you're able to get information on your local HIV testing site 24 hours a day.

[Matthew Reynolds] I understand that CDC is also launching a new way to find HIV testing centers?

[Dr. Fenton] Yes. We are launching a new way to find HIV testing centers and we're actually very excited about this new development. CDC is highlighting new cell phone database technology for World AIDS Day. On your cell phone simply text your zip code to the numbers that spell *KNOW IT*, 566948. Within seconds, you'll receive a text message containing an HIV testing site near you. This service will certainly allow those without access to the internet to easily find a testing site near them.

[Matthew Reynolds]. Dr. Fenton, I just tried this. I just texted my zip code to the number and you're right. Within seconds, the center popped up.

[Dr. Fenton] Great. It's good to know it's working.

[Matthew Reynolds] Well Dr. Fenton, thank you so much for taking the time to talk to us today about HIV testing and World AIDS Day.

[Dr. Fenton] Thank you.

[Matthew Reynolds] That's it for this week's show. Don't forget to join us next week. Until then, be well. This is Matthew Reynolds for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

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