

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

I'm Dr. Julie Gerberding. My first experience with HIV occurred when I was an intern in 1981 at San Francisco General Hospital. We saw the first patients in this country with HIV, but we had no idea at that time that we were encountering a new infectious disease. The experience was humbling to me as a doctor, and since then, I've learned something from each HIV patient I've met in the U.S. and around the world.

AIDS is a disease that affects everyone – and it's a disease that elicits our personal response to some of the toughest issues for most people – our mortality, our morality, and our sexuality. More than 25 years have passed since HIV emerged, but it's still one of the top health concerns around the world. In addition, more and more women are infected and at risk. In fact, in 2006, nearly 18 million women worldwide 15 years of age or older, were living with HIV -- an increase of more than a million from just two years before.

In the United States, adult women and adolescent girls accounted for more than a quarter of all new HIV/AIDS diagnoses in 2005 in the 33 states that have HIV reporting. Women of color in the United States are especially affected. In 2004, HIV infection was the number one cause of death for African-American women ages 25–34 and the fourth leading cause of death for Hispanic women ages 35–44.

As women, we are so often caretakers of our families and our friends. But we must also learn to be the caretakers of our own health. There is much each of us can do: Learn the facts, empower ourselves with knowledge so we avoid exposure risks, seek the support of others, and most importantly, get tested for HIV.

CDC recommends that all Americans between the ages of 13 and 64 be tested for HIV as a routine part of their medical care. Talk to a health care provider if you've never been tested, or if you had your last HIV test some time ago. Treatment now can save your life, and you can take steps to protect your partner from the disease.

CDC also recommends that pregnant women be tested during each pregnancy. If you're thinking about getting pregnant, get tested now. If you are pregnant, get tested early to protect your baby from infection.

NOW is the time for us to protect ourselves and to take action to save our lives.

Learn more about HIV prevention at www.cdc.gov/hiv.

You can also learn where HIV testing is available at www.hivtest.org.

Thank you.

[Announcer] To access the most accurate and relevant health information that affects you, your family and your community, please visit www.cdc.gov.