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FLORIDA HEALTH HIGHLIGHTS IMPORTANCE OF HIV TESTING ON NATIONAL WOMEN AND GIRLS HIV/AIDS AWARENESS DAY

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Tallahassee, Fla. – The Florida Department of Health is highlighting the importance of HIV testing on the 12th Annual National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, celebrated each year on March 10 as an opportunity to empower women and girls to make the best choices when it comes to sexual health. From 2011 through 2015, the number of new diagnoses of HIV infection among adult women (age 13+) in Florida decreased by 11 percent and the department is focusing on several key strategies to make an even greater impact on reducing HIV rates in Florida.

“Educating women and girls on the steps they can take to prevent infection and helping them get access to needed care and treatment if they are positive are critical to reducing HIV/AIDS rates in Florida even further,” said State Surgeon General and Secretary of Health Dr. Celeste Philip. “Practicing safe sex can help prevent infection and getting tested is the only way to know for sure if you’re positive. I encourage all women and girls to get tested through their health care provider or local county health department. Knowing your status can empower women to seek needed treatment or take steps to remain HIV negative.”

In 2015, adult women accounted for 28 percent of adults living with HIV disease in Florida. Black women are disproportionately represented in the total women living with HIV in Florida as they make up 68 percent of the 31,368 women currently living with HIV in Florida diagnosed through 2015. Additionally, HIV was the 3rd leading cause of death for black women compared to HIV being the 11th leading cause of death for white women, however, HIV-related deaths for black women are currently on the decline.

Florida continues to lead the nation in the number of HIV tests conducted at over 1,500 publicly funded and registered sites. You can view our [interactive map](#) to find nearby sites for counseling, testing and referral.

The department is focusing on four key strategies to reduce HIV rates in Florida and getting to zero, including:

- Routine screening for HIV and implementation of CDC testing guidelines;
- Increased testing among high-risk populations and providing immediate access to treatment as well as re-engaging HIV positive persons into the care system, with the ultimate goal of getting HIV positive persons to an undetectable viral load;

- The use of PrEP and nPEP as prevention strategies to reduce the risk of contracting HIV; and
- Increased community outreach and awareness about HIV, high-risk behaviors, the importance of knowing one's status and if positive, quickly accessing and staying in treatment.

In addition to testing at county health departments, the [Florida HIV/AIDS Hotline](#) is the statewide resource for HIV/AIDS-related information, community referrals and telephone counseling. The department facilitates nearly 30 [minority initiatives](#) to reduce the number of new HIV diagnoses in the state.

To learn more about National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, please visit womenshealth.gov and for Florida specific information on HIV/AIDS prevention, visit the [prevention program homepage](#).

About the Florida Department of Health

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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