

Thursday, December 1, 2022

## THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH OBSERVES WORLD AIDS DAY 2022

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**Tallahassee, Fla.**— Each year on December 1, World AIDS Day is observed around the globe, serving as a memorial for those lost to HIV and as an opportunity to make people aware of enhanced HIV prevention and treatment options. This year’s World AIDS Day theme is **“Putting Ourselves to the Test: Achieving Equity to End HIV,”** which encourages people to unite to eliminate the barriers to HIV testing, prevention, and treatment that are holding back progress on ending the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

The Florida Department of Health (DOH) stands in solidarity with people and communities across the globe on World AIDS Day, especially our Florida communities and health care partners that work every day to help end the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Florida has made great strides to reduce HIV transmission and continues to work toward eliminating HIV-related deaths by providing broad access to HIV prevention and care services. The rate of HIV deaths among all persons diagnosed with HIV in Florida has declined by 31% over the last decade, but there is still more progress to be made. In 2021, there were 120,502 people living with HIV in Florida, 4,708 of whom were newly diagnosed.

“We have come a long way since the first HIV diagnosis, but there is still work to be done to end the HIV/AIDS epidemic,” **said Lieutenant Governor Jeanette Nuñez.** “I have been working directly with DOH and HIV stakeholders this past year to discuss how we can further our progress in fighting HIV/AIDS. We must continue to break down barriers to ensure Floridians can access improved and continuously evolving HIV treatment and prevention options. These are crucial to helping Floridians live long and healthy lives.”

It is important that people know their options when it comes to HIV prevention and treatment. Medication-based HIV prevention—called pre-exposure prophylaxis, or PrEP—and HIV treatment are both based around antiretroviral therapy. Until recently, these medications were only available in pill form. Now, HIV prevention and treatment has evolved to include long-acting injectables. These medications are as effective as daily pills and provide individuals with additional options. Ensuring every single person has an HIV prevention or treatment option that works for them is key to ending the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

“On this day, we honor the lives lost to HIV by seeking collaborative and innovative solutions to help us end the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Florida and across the globe,” said **State Surgeon General Dr. Joseph Ladapo.** “Today is also a day to increase awareness of the HIV treatment and prevention options that are available to people. Long-acting injectable medications promote increased accessibility to HIV prevention and treatment, but people need to know about them, talk about them, and understand where and how to access them. That is why awareness days like World AIDS Day are so important—they provide opportunities to engage with our communities and to have conversations about what’s new.”

**Protect yourself. Get tested. Know your status. Learn what's next.**

Knowing your status is the first step toward effective HIV prevention and treatment. People can reduce their risk for HIV by using appropriate prevention strategies, such as taking pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), using protection, and getting tested regularly. Contact a health care provider to find out if PrEP is recommended for you.

If you test positive for HIV, seeking HIV treatment is critical. Antiretroviral therapy can help people live longer, healthier lives. People living with HIV who take antiretroviral medication as prescribed and have an undetectable viral load cannot transmit HIV to their sexual partners. Both PrEP and HIV treatment medications are now available as pills and long-acting injectables.

[All 67 county health departments](#) provide HIV testing, PrEP, and other HIV-related services.

We have the power to both prevent and treat HIV. Visit [KnowYourHIVStatus.com](https://www.knowyourhivstatus.com) to learn about testing options in your area or to order a free at-home HIV testing kit mailed directly to the address of your choice. For more information, call 1-800-FLA-AIDS, or 1-800-352-2437; en español, 1-800-545-SIDA; in Creole, 1-800-AIDS-101.

About the Florida Department of Health

The Florida Department of Health, 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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