

June 27, 2019

## Florida Department of Health in Duval County Recognizes HIV Testing Day



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**Jacksonville, Fla.** — June 27, 2019, commemorates National HIV Testing Day (NHTD). First observed in 1995, NHTD is meant to encourage people to be aware of their HIV status so that they can take control of their health. This year's theme, "**Doing It My Way**," highlights how and why people make testing a part of their lives. The Florida Department of Health in Duval County (DOH-Duval) joins community partners across the country to emphasize the importance of getting tested, knowing your status, and getting linked to care and treatment.

According to Dr. Pauline Rolle, Interim Health Officer for the Florida Department of Health in Duval County, "It is vital to live a healthy lifestyle by knowing your status, visiting your primary care provider for regularly scheduled visits, and taking steps to either lower your risk of acquiring the disease or lower your viral load."

Cindy Watson, Chief Executive Officer of the Jacksonville Area Sexual Minority Youth Network (JASMYN), said, "It is especially important for young people to get tested, and we see this as an opportunity to educate youth about sexual health and prevention strategies. With the availability of biomedical interventions such as PrEP and Treatment as Prevention, an early test can help us give young people the best interventions to end this epidemic for the next generation. JASMYN supports the "Doing it My Way" campaign to help young people make HIV testing a routine part of their health care."

In 2017, 116,944 Floridians were confirmed to be living with HIV. An estimated 18,000 more were living with HIV but unaware of it. "To see these numbers come down in our state, we need to recognize the role of stigma as a barrier to getting tested," said department HIV/AIDS Section Administrator Laura Reeves. "Normalizing HIV testing and making sure there's a testing option that works for everyone is one way to reduce stigma. This is important, because knowing your HIV status gives you the power to make informed decisions about your health. Our goal is to work with our partners to make sure every Floridian has that power."

### Get Tested.

Did you know that there's more than one type of HIV test? Most use either a blood sample or fluid swabbed from the inside of your cheek. There are different settings in which you can take an HIV test, too, including in the comfort and privacy of your own home. Visit [KnowYourHIVStatus.com](http://KnowYourHIVStatus.com) to learn more about testing options in your area or to order a free at-home HIV testing kit mailed directly to the address of your choice (while supplies last).

## **Knowing your HIV status is just the beginning.**

It's crucial that people living with HIV begin treatment as soon as possible. Immediate treatment with antiretroviral therapy (ART) typically leads to long, healthy lives for people living with HIV. It's also a method of HIV prevention. ART reduces the amount of HIV in the body, which makes it harder to transmit to others. People living with HIV who reach and maintain what's called "viral suppression" (fewer than 200 copies of HIV per milliliter of blood) have effectively no risk of sexually transmitting HIV to an HIV-negative partner.

There are also prevention tools for people who haven't been diagnosed with HIV. While HIV prevention is truly a group effort, it can look very different from person to person. A health care provider can do a risk/needs assessment to determine appropriate next steps, which might include taking pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and using condoms to reduce the risk of acquiring HIV. Prevention may also take the form of regular retesting.

### **Observe NHTD with us!**

DOH-Duval will be hosting or participating in the following events:

#### **National HIV Testing Day - Thursday, June 27, 2019**

##### **River Region**

**10:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.**

Walgreens Locations:

2703 Park St. 32205

5340 Soutel Dr. 32219

866 Dunn Ave. 32218

5108 Norwood Ave. 32208

7512 Lem Turner 32208

##### **APEL**

**10:00 a.m.**

Walgreens Location:

866 Dunn Ave. 32218

##### **DOH-Duval/CRC**

Campus Towers

1850 Kings Rd. 32209

1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

##### **Cupcakes and Conversation**

**Friday, June 28, 2019**

**11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.**

DOH-Duval Central Health Plaza - Breezeway

515 W. 6<sup>th</sup> St. 32209

##### **Gateway Community Services**

Noon – 6:00 p.m.

##### **AIDS Healthcare Foundation**

**6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.**

Cleveland Arms

5020 Cleveland Rd. 32209

##### **Unitarian Universalist Church of Jacksonville**

**12:15 p.m. – 2:15 p.m.**

7405 Arlington Expressway 32211

##### **CAN Community Health and Lutheran Social Services**

**1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.**

HIV Testing and Barbecue Event

4615 Phillips Hwy. 32207

##### **Empowering, Engaging, and Education**

**Saturday, June 29, 2019**

**2:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.**

Free food, HIV Testing, and activities for all ages.

Simonds Johnson Park

3730 Moncrief Road 32209

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

For more information, please call 904-253-1HIV or 1-800-FLA-AIDS. Visit

[KnowYourHIVStatus.com](http://KnowYourHIVStatus.com) to find a testing location near you.

### **About the Florida Department of Health**

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

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