



Helping Those At Risk For HIV To Stay Healthy

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(NAPSA)—An individual could be placed at risk for becoming infected with HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) by having unprotected sex or sharing needles when injecting illegal drugs—so it is very important to be tested. If the HIV test result is positive, it is critical to seek medical attention immediately to receive appropriate health care treatment.

Sharing needles when injecting illegal drugs is responsible for about 10 percent of HIV cases annually. Findings from the 2010 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) on HIV/AIDS and Substance Use indicate that one in six people with HIV/AIDS have used an illegal drug intravenously in their lifetime. There is also a strong link between methamphetamine use and the transmission of HIV among men who have sex with men—a population group disproportionately affected by HIV and AIDS.

Using or abusing drugs (including prescription drugs) and alcohol can put a person at risk for HIV. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), people with substance use disorders are at greater risk of contracting and transmitting an HIV infection. This is because drugs and alcohol can impair judgment and contribute to poor decision making (for example, sex without condoms or unprotected sex with multiple partners). According to the NSDUH report, one-fourth of people ages 12 and older who had been told by a doctor that they had HIV/AIDS engaged in binge drinking in the past month, and nearly one-third used illegal drugs in the past month.

Many individuals who have HIV don't know it. In fact, CDC reports that of the 1.1 million people living with HIV, about one in six do not know that they are



Experts at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report drug abuse and related behaviors play the single largest role in the spread of HIV infection in the U.S. today.

infected with the virus. The sooner someone knows that he or she is HIV positive, the earlier that person can begin effective treatment and reach the greatest benefit toward living a healthier life. Studies indicate that treatment with antiretroviral medications can be very helpful to people who have become infected with HIV. In fact, treatment with antiretroviral medications lowers the level of HIV in the blood (viral load), reducing HIV-related illness and the spread of HIV to others.

Access to timely and accurate information is key. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), which leads public health efforts to advance the behavioral health of the nation, has a series of publications designed to provide professionals and the general public with critical information on substance abuse, HIV and related topics. For example, the publication "Substance Abuse Treatment for Persons With HIV/AIDS" can be found at <http://store.samhsa.gov/product/TIP-37-Substance-Abuse-Treatment-for-Persons-With-HIV-AIDS/SMA12-4137>.

Learn more at www.samhsa.gov/hiv-aids-viral-hepatitis.

National HIV Testing Day is 6/27/15.