
HEALTH DEPARTMENT
NEWS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 27, 2019

For additional information contact:

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Kent County Health Department Offers Free HIV Testing Clinic in Recognition of World Aids Day

GRAND RAPIDS, MI. – In recognition of World Aids Day, Sunday December 1, 2019, the Kent County Health Department (KCHD) will be offering free walk-in testing Monday through Friday during the week of December 2, 2019. The confidential testing will be available at KCHD’s main clinic located at 700 Fuller NE, Grand Rapids, MI. from 8:00AM until 6:45PM.

The simple finger poke test can yield preliminary results in about 20 minutes. During that time our Personal Health Services certified counselors will provide advice on protecting yourself and others from HIV. A certified HIV counselor will discuss ways to reduce the risk of getting HIV which may include information on pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP). PrEP is a daily medicine that can reduce the chance of getting HIV. PrEP can stop HIV from taking hold and spreading throughout the body according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

HIV, Human Immunodeficiency Virus, attacks the cells that make up the body’s immune system. There are many medications available today that can strengthen the immune system. Left untreated HIV can develop into Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome - AIDS – which can be fatal.

HIV and AIDS remains a persistent public health problem in the United States and around the world. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that there are more than 1.2 million adults in the U.S. who are living with HIV and 15% of those people do not know they have the disease. More information about HIV can be found [here](#).

“One of the biggest reasons people tell us they are reluctant to get tested is the stigma that often goes with HIV,” says April Hight, Public Health Program Supervisor at KCHD. “Referring to people with HIV as “victims”, or “sufferers” or as being “contaminated” or “sick”, makes some with HIV feel that they are powerless. However, with today’s medication and treatment, people living with HIV have more control over their lives than ever before.” More information about ending HIV stigma can be found by clicking [here](#).

Many people don’t know that the HIV in a person’s blood can become “undetectable” when a person living with HIV takes their medications as prescribed by their doctor. Several large studies have shown that people living with HIV who are undetectable are not able to pass on HIV to others. More information can be found by clicking [here](#).

If you are living with HIV and need help getting into care, call 616-632-7172, or come to KCHD and ask to speak with a nurse.

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KCHD has been in the business of providing health services to Kent County since 1931. The Health Department is home to nearly 265 employees including public health nurses, sanitarians, health educators, technicians, public health administrators, and specialized staff at the Kent County Animal Shelter. The Health Department operates one main clinic and three satellite clinics located in Kentwood, Rockford, and Grand Rapids. To learn more about KCHD services, visit www.accesskent.com/health.

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