

## NEW JERSEY AIDS/HIV/STD HOTLINE

### **PRESS RELEASE**

September 2020

## National Gay Men's HIV/AIDS Awareness Day September 27<sup>th</sup>

**(New Jersey)** – September 27<sup>th</sup> is National Gay Men's HIV/AIDS Awareness Day (NGMHAAD), a time to remember the historic impact of HIV and AIDS on [gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men \(MSM\)](#) in the United States. Even with today's effective prevention and treatment options, HIV continues to affect this community the most when compared to other communities. Gay, bisexual, and other MSM account for the largest number of new HIV diagnoses and the largest number of individuals living with HIV in the United States.<sup>1</sup>

National Gay Men's HIV/AIDS Awareness Day empowers gay, bisexual and other MSM to talk openly about HIV risk, testing, proven prevention strategies, and effective treatment options. Couples must be encouraged to [get tested](#) together and to openly talk about their test results (HIV status). Some behaviors and activities put gay, bisexual and other MSM at [higher risk](#) for HIV, but there are proven strategies to lower risk. Knowing your HIV status and your partner's status helps you make safer choices that keep you both healthy.

We must acknowledge lessons learned from the near 40-year history of the HIV and AIDS epidemic. Stigma (negative and usually unfair beliefs), homophobia, and discrimination (unfairly treating a person or group of people differently) greatly affect the health and well-being of those most at risk of HIV. These challenges may prevent gay, bisexual and other MSM from getting and receiving medical care, including prevention and treatment services for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STI).

Many gay, bisexual and other MSM feel their family doctors and other healthcare providers are not familiar with LGBTQ health issues, preventing them from receiving appropriate medical care and support services in a safe and inclusive environment. By not being in medical care, gay, bisexual and other MSM are at high risk for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) like syphilis, chlamydia, gonorrhea, and hepatitis.

The CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) estimates that 1 in 6 gay and bisexual men with HIV do not know they have HIV.<sup>2</sup> People who do not know they have HIV or other STIs can't protect their health by getting treatment. Not knowing their status also means they may pass HIV or other STI to others without knowing it. Getting tested is the only way to know for sure whether you have or do not have HIV or other STIs.

If you test positive for HIV (have HIV):

- start HIV [treatment](#) right after getting your positive test result
- [share your HIV status](#) with previous and current sex partners(s) and anyone you use needles or syringes with to inject drugs
- get and keep an [undetectable viral load](#) (very low amount of HIV in the body) so you can stay healthy and not pass HIV to others through sex

- continue using [condoms](#) the right way every time you have sex to prevent getting sexually transmitted infections like chlamydia, syphilis, gonorrhea, and hepatitis

If you test negative for HIV (do not have HIV):

- continue using [safer sex practices](#) to lower your risk of getting the virus
- talk to your sex partner(s) about testing and their HIV and STI status
- continue to get tested often if you are at high risk for HIV
- talk to your healthcare provider about using HIV medicines to prevent getting HIV: [PrEP \(pre-exposure prophylaxis\)](#) or [PEP \(post-exposure prophylaxis\)](#)
- continue using condoms the right way every time you have sex to prevent getting sexually transmitted infections

HIV testing, education, and open conversation are key to ending the HIV epidemic. With better testing, treatment, and prevention options, gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men can take control of their health and also help protect the health of others in their community.

New Jersey offers free HIV and other STI services to all state residents via the hotline. Knowing who to call for resources and information is the first step in ending the HIV epidemic in New Jersey. The hotline is staffed by health professionals (doctors, nurses, and pharmacists) available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to provide free, confidential help: Call: 1-800-624-2377; Text: 973-339-0712, or [chat here](#)

- Referrals for testing sites and other related services
- HIV, STI and hepatitis prevention and treatment information
- Side effects from medicines used to treat HIV and other sexually transmitted infections
- Referrals to PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) and PEP (post-exposure prophylaxis) services
- Counseling and treatment locations
- Partner notification
- ADDP

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#### **New Jersey AIDS/HIV/STD Hotline**

Healthcare professionals (doctors, nurses and pharmacists) provide telephone consultation for people seeking information about HIV/AIDS, pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP), and other sexually transmitted infections (STI) including hepatitis. Callers receive information tailored to their needs; discussion about prevention, referrals for testing sites and other related services, counseling and testing locations, and information on treatment and adverse reactions to medications. The hotline is administered by the New Jersey Poison Control Center and funded by the New Jersey Department of Health, Division of HIV, STD, and TB services.

#### **Rutgers New Jersey Medical School**

Founded in 1954, Rutgers New Jersey Medical School is the oldest school of medicine in the state. Today it is part of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey and graduates approximately 170 physicians a year. In addition to providing the MD degree, the school offers MD/PhD, MD/MPH and MD/MBA degrees through collaborations with other institutions of higher education. Dedicated to excellence in education, research, clinical care and community outreach, the medical school comprises 20 academic departments and works with several healthcare partners, including its principal teaching hospital, University Hospital. Its faculty consists of numerous world-renowned scientists and many of the region's "top doctors." Home to the nation's oldest student-run



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clinic, New Jersey Medical School hosts more than 50 centers and institutes, including the Public Health Research Institute Center, the Global Tuberculosis Institute and the Neurological Institute of New Jersey. For more information please visit: [njms.rutgers.edu](http://njms.rutgers.edu).

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