

## NEW JERSEY AIDS/HIV/STD HOTLINE

### **PRESS RELEASE**

September 2021

### **Living Long With HIV**

(New Jersey) – Thanks to significant improvements in HIV care and testing, people living with HIV are living long healthy lives. Newer, more effective HIV medicine (antiretroviral therapy or ART) provides more options and better long-term health outcomes for people diagnosed with HIV.

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) more than 50% of Americans diagnosed with HIV are over the age of 50<sup>1</sup>. Although this is a celebrated success in our nation's efforts towards controlling the virus and ending AIDS, it brings attention to the unique health and social needs and challenges faced by people aging with HIV.

Although aging adults visit their health providers more often, they may feel more stigmatized when talking about HIV and other STIs. Providers are also less likely to test older adults for STIs and ask about their current or past drug use and sexual risk behaviors. Breaking stigmas around aging, drug use and sexual behaviors will encourage open and honest conversations between patients and health providers.

Getting older comes with its own health complications, further complicating HIV treatment plans for people with HIV. Older adults have increased rates of age-related illnesses and conditions such as heart disease, certain cancers, bone fractures, loss of muscle mass, dementia, and kidney disease. Combining HIV medicines with other medicines for age-related conditions may cause serious drug interactions and side effects.

If you're experiencing side effects from medicines used to treat HIV or other sexually transmitted infections (STIs), contact the health professionals at the NJ AIDS/HIV/STD Hotline. The hotline is available 24/7: Call: 1-800-624-2377; [Chat Here](#)

It's common for someone to pass HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) to others through sex and/or drug use without knowing it. Older adults have many of the same sexual risk behaviors as young people. Since older adults often underestimate their risk of sexually transmitted infections, they are less likely to use condoms while engaging in sexual activities. Everyone who is sexually active and/or uses drugs should get tested for HIV and other STIs regularly.

Older adults with HIV should take precautions to lower their risk of developing age-related health complications.

- **Don't Smoke Tobacco** – smoking has many negative health effects. Not only is it known to cause

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<sup>1</sup> CDC. [HIV and Older Americans](#)

multiple forms of cancer and lung disease, it also increases the risk for heart attacks and strokes.

- **Minimize Alcohol and Drug Use** – abusing or misusing drugs and alcohol can make it difficult to continue following a daily HIV treatment plan. HIV medicine and recreational drugs can interact dangerously and cause serious health effects. Alcohol and drug use lowers judgement. People are more likely to engage in sexual risk behaviors that increase the chance of getting or passing HIV and other STIs.
- **Diet and Exercise** – maintaining a healthy diet and exercise routine will boost the immune system and lowers the risk of hard to fight infections (opportunistic infections). Exercise is known to also reduce inflammation in the body which helps protect against premature aging. People on long-term HIV treatment often experience side effects related to chronic inflammation and other age-related illnesses and conditions much earlier than people who do not have HIV.
- **Keep Yourself Safe From COVID-19** – although there has been no evidence that links HIV to more severe cases of COVID-19, age is a major risk factor for experiencing severe illness. All older adults or those living with chronic diseases should be vaccinated for COVID-19 to lower the risk of complications. Along with vaccinations, people should wash hands often, wear masks and social distancing when necessary.

## Get Tested. Start Treatment. Stop HIV.

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; [Chat Here](#)

- Referrals for testing, prevention, treatment, and other related services
- Prevention and treatment information for HIV, hepatitis, and other sexually transmitted infections
- Information on the side effects of 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
- Referrals to harm reduction centers (syringe access available)
- Partner notification services
- New Jersey's AIDS Drug Distribution Program ([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 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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