



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Dec. 1, 2021

CONTACT:

nancy.nydam@dph.ga.gov

World AIDS Day December 1

Prevention is Treatment

Atlanta – World AIDS Day, observed each year on December 1, is an opportunity for people worldwide to unite in the fight against HIV, show their support for people living with HIV, and remember those who have died from an HIV-related illness. Started in 1988, World AIDS Day was the first-ever global health day.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) ranks Georgia fourth in the nation for the number of new HIV diagnoses. The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) encourages people to observe World AIDS Day by getting tested for HIV. While there is no effective cure for HIV, with proper treatment and care, HIV positive individuals can – and do - live long, healthy lives.

“Ensuring that everyone who is HIV infected has access to testing and life-saving treatment must be a priority in Georgia,” said Kathleen E. Toomey, M.D., M.P.H., commissioner of the Georgia Department of Public Health. “Even as we are continuing to fight the COVID-19 pandemic we have to remember there’s another pandemic, HIV, that continues to affect millions of people worldwide and Georgia disproportionately.”

Prevention and treatment options for HIV have changed significantly since the beginning of the HIV pandemic more than 40 years ago. Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is a pill taken daily by HIV negative individuals before contact with someone who is HIV positive. If taken as prescribed, PrEP reduces the chance of HIV infection by more than 90% in those exposed through sex and by more than 70% in those exposed through injection drug use.

“PrEP is a powerful HIV prevention tool, and, when used with condoms, the risk of acquiring other sexually transmitted diseases is also reduced,” said Dr. Toomey. “When combined with routine HIV testing, PrEP provides even greater protection.”

Undetectable = Untransmittable (U=U) means that people with HIV who achieve and maintain an undetectable viral load—the amount of HIV in the blood—by taking antiretroviral therapy (ART) daily as prescribed cannot sexually transmit the virus to others. Additionally, since the advent of highly active antiretroviral therapy, deaths due to HIV have declined substantially.

One in six individuals living with HIV in Georgia doesn’t know they have the virus, which increases the risk they will infect someone else. Testing is the only way to know your status. When you know your HIV status, you can talk to a health care provider about treatment options if you’re HIV-positive or learn ways to prevent getting HIV if you’re HIV-negative.

For more information about HIV prevention, testing and treatment resources in Georgia, log on to <https://www.gacapus.com>.