
HEALTH DEPARTMENT
NEWS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 29, 2021

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**Kent County Health Department Offers Free, Walk-In Testing Opportunities
in Recognition of World AIDS Day**

GRAND RAPIDS, MI. (Monday, Nov. 29, 2021) In recognition of World AIDS Day, the Kent County Health Department (KCHD) will be holding a free walk-in HIV testing event on Wednesday, December 1, 2021, from 8 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. at the KCHD main clinic located at 700 Fuller NE in Grand Rapids. Certified test counselors will be at the clinic to provide testing, answer questions, and connect residents with needed services.

December 1, 2021, marks 40 years ago since the beginning of the HIV epidemic in the United States. Since then, more than 700,000 people in the United States have died from the virus. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that one in eight people living with HIV in the United States do not know they have the disease. Testing is the only way for someone to know their status and take the necessary steps to stop the spread of the HIV virus.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has made testing difficult,” says April Hight, Personal Health Services Supervisor at KCHD. “This year we are hoping that more people will take advantage of our clinic and we will raise the level of community awareness about the importance of HIV testing.”

Great strides have been made in the treatment of HIV. While there is no vaccine for the virus, today’s treatments enable people with the virus to live long and healthy lives. One treatment is PrEP, a daily pill that is 99 percent effective at reducing the risk of acquiring the virus.

A person living with HIV who is on treatment and has an undetectable level of the virus in their blood are unable to transmit the virus to others. This prevention method is estimated to be 100 percent effective as long as the person living with HIV takes their medication as prescribed and gets and stays undetectable. This concept, which the KCHD supports, is known as Undetectable = Untransmittable (U=U).

HIV testing and PrEP is available at the KCHD Personal Health Services Clinic. Residents are encouraged to call the KCHD at 616-632-7171 to schedule a test or to find out if PrEP is right for them.

The theme for this “World AIDS Day is “Ending the HIV Epidemic: Equitable Access, Everyone’s Voice,” which emphasizes the United States’ commitment to ending the HIV epidemic globally by addressing health inequities and ensuring the voices of people with HIV are central in all our work. Visit <https://www.worldaidsday.org/> to learn more about this global health day.

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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 260 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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