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## Routine HIV Screening in Medical Settings

To: Vermont Healthcare Providers  
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– Please Distribute Widely –

### Background

The Vermont Department of Health has launched a new campaign – [www.11years.org](http://www.11years.org) – designed to encourage Vermonters to get tested for HIV antibody. It can take up to 11 years before a person with HIV develops any outward symptoms of AIDS, leading them to believe they are not infected. People who are infected with HIV but not aware of it are not able to take advantage of the therapies that can keep them healthy and extend their lives, nor do they have the knowledge to protect their sex or drug-use partners from becoming infected.

The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) and the Health Department recommend routine HIV screening for adults, adolescents and pregnant women in all health care settings. HIV antibody testing should occur as part of a normal standard of care, regardless of the patient's stated risk history or motivation for seeking health care. Individuals who appear to have no risk for HIV but who request an HIV test should be tested, as not all people feel comfortable disclosing personal risk information.

Diagnosis is the first step in improving the survival of people with HIV and reducing transmission. The continuum of services includes diagnosis (HIV testing), linkage to and retention in HIV medical care, and ongoing HIV prevention interventions, including appropriately timed antiretroviral therapy (ART). The Health Department will work with medical providers to link their HIV-positive patients to these and other resources such as partner notification, medication assistance and case management as needed.

Medical providers may receive an increase in requests for testing as a result of the "11years" campaign.

### Current Recommendations for HIV Testing

- **Patients in all healthcare settings:**  
HIV screening is recommended for patients ages 13 to 64 in all healthcare settings after the patient is notified that testing will be performed, unless the patient declines (opt-out screening). People at high risk for HIV infection should be screened for HIV at least annually.

Separate written consent for HIV testing is not required. General consent for medical care is considered sufficient to encompass consent for HIV testing. Prevention counseling is not required with HIV diagnostic testing, or as part of HIV screening programs in healthcare settings.

## Special Targeted Populations

- **Pregnant Women**

HIV screening should be included in the routine panel of prenatal screening tests for all pregnant women. HIV screening is recommended after the patient is notified that testing will be performed, unless the patient declines (opt-out screening). Repeat screening in the third trimester is recommended for women at increased risk of contracting HIV. A Rapid HIV test should be administered in Labor and Delivery for any pregnant woman who does not have a documented HIV test.

- **Patients with STDs**

HIV screening should be performed for all patients seeking treatment for an active STD. HIV screening is recommended after the patient is notified that testing will be performed, unless the patient declines (opt-out screening).

- **Patients with Rheumatic Diseases**

All patients with systemic rheumatic diseases, especially those receiving or being considered for disease-modifying anti-rheumatic therapy should be evaluated systematically for the presence of HIV.

- **Patients Starting Anti-Cancer Therapies**

All cancer patients who are starting anti-cancer therapies, including surgery, chemotherapy and radiation, should be evaluated systematically for the presence of HIV.

## Resources

For questions related to this alert or support with initiating routine HIV testing, call the Vermont Department of Health at 800-882-2437 or 802-863-7329.

HIV test request forms, test kit supply request forms and directions for the submission of serum or oral fluid samples are available online at:

[http://www.healthvermont.gov/enviro/ph\\_lab/clinicalabservicesmanual.aspx#Forms](http://www.healthvermont.gov/enviro/ph_lab/clinicalabservicesmanual.aspx#Forms)

The Health Department Laboratory will bill insurance directly for costs associated with test kit provision and test processing.

Contact the Comprehensive Care Clinics at 802-847-4594 (main office at Fletcher Allen Health Care) for assistance in delivering results and linking individuals to HIV specialty care.

*Vermont Guidelines for Universal HIV Counseling and Voluntary HIV Testing for Pregnant Women:*

[http://healthvermont.gov/prevent/aids/documents/HIVtesting\\_guidelines\\_pregnant.pdf](http://healthvermont.gov/prevent/aids/documents/HIVtesting_guidelines_pregnant.pdf)

For more information on HIV testing in a healthcare setting:

<http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/testing/healthcare/>