

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

November 30, 2023

**Local HIV Infections Increase**  
*Have you been tested?*

December 1<sup>st</sup> is recognized as [World AIDS Day](#). It's a day dedicated to raising awareness, showing support for people living with HIV, and remembering those who have died from the infection. The Grand Traverse County Health Department (GTCHD) and the Northern Michigan Public Health Alliance are encouraging residents to be proactive and get tested as there has been an increase in the number of HIV diagnoses in our area.

The noted rise was determined by comparing information collected from 2019-2023 with data from 2014-2018. Over that time, HIV diagnoses increased 2.5 times the average number from 14 positive cases to 44 cases in this region. The region includes Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Benzie, Leelanau, Manistee, Wexford, Missaukee, Antrim, Charlevoix, and Emmet counties.

Other data from the report:

- 67% were diagnosed in the emergency room or during outpatient visits,
- Almost 41% do not have an identified risk, such as reported injection drug use, and
- 78% of the new diagnoses were among residents over 30 years of age, with the majority over 40.

Research also from the study showed that those diagnosed did not know about HIV testing or the availability of medication that can be prescribed to prevent or control the spread of the disease.

"Medications available today will not only treat those infected with HIV, or further, prevent an infection within 72 hours of possible exposure," said GTCHD Medical Director Najibah Rehman, MD, MPH. "Today, individuals can prevent an infection altogether or even live a healthy life with undetectable levels of virus on current regimens. We encourage individuals to have open and honest conversations with their healthcare providers to determine if they would benefit from these preventive therapies while practicing safe sex with regular condom use and testing."

[U.S. Preventive Services Task Force](#) recommends that everyone between 15-65 years old and all pregnant persons, including those who are in labor or delivery, get tested at least once in their lifetime.

GTCHD offers HIV tests at its clinics. The test involves a blood sample. HIV test results are given to the client privately by a Michigan Department of Health and Human Services-approved HIV Counselor medical professional. GTCHD partners with [Thomas Judd Care Center](#) and the Central Michigan District Health Department for all positive test results and confidential follow-up.

Appointments may be easily made by calling us at 231-995-6113. When scheduling an appointment for HIV testing, residents may also be tested for other sexually transmitted infections such as Hepatitis C, chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis.

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