

# HEALTHY PEOPLE 2020

## CRITICAL INDICATORS FOR ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG ADULTS



### Proportion of adolescents and young adults who have been tested for HIV in the past 12 months

#### Overview of HIV in the United States

The human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) epidemic in the United States continues to be a major public health issue. An estimated 1.1 million Americans currently live with HIV. Approximately one in five people infected with HIV do not know their HIV status, which increases the likelihood of transmission.<sup>1</sup>

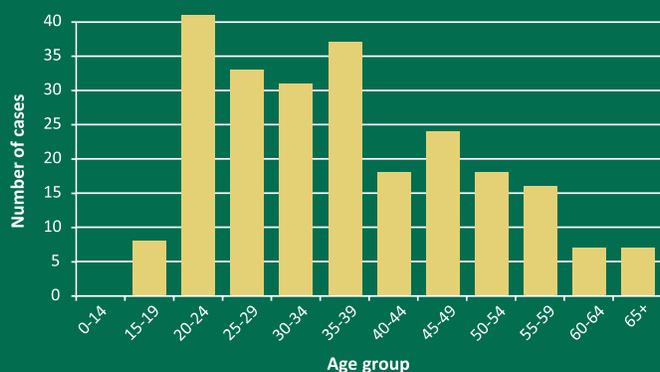
#### HIV diagnoses in Oregon

Oregon's HIV/AIDS diagnosis rates began to decline from a peak of 19 cases per 100,000 residents of all ages in 1991 to six cases per 100,000 residents of all ages in 2010.<sup>3</sup> These declines can be attributed to a combination of factors, such as earlier diagnosis, behavior changes, reduction in transmission from pregnant women to their infants and reduced infectiousness of HIV-positive individuals due to the use of antiretroviral therapies.<sup>3</sup>

Oregon's HIV diagnosis rates illustrate disparities reflective of national trends.<sup>3</sup> Men who have sex with men (MSM), persons who inject drugs (PWID), young people between the ages of 20 and 29 years and ethnic minorities are more likely to be diagnosed with HIV. Oregon's diagnosis rates continue to be higher among blacks and Hispanics than whites.<sup>3</sup>

Figure 1 showcases the number of newly diagnosed cases of HIV among Oregon residents by age groups in 2010. Youth between the ages of 15 and 24 accounted for 12 percent of new HIV diagnoses in Oregon, compared to 17 percent nationally.<sup>2, 4</sup>

**Number of newly diagnosed cases of HIV among Oregon residents by age group, 2010**



**Figure 1**

Source: Oregon Health Authority Public Health Data (2012)

In 2010, young people aged 15 to 24 accounted for approximately 17 percent of all new HIV diagnoses in the United States.<sup>2</sup> Young gay and bisexual men and young African Americans are disproportionately affected by new HIV diagnoses.<sup>2</sup>

## Importance of early HIV testing and testing recommendations for young adults

HIV testing is fundamental to HIV prevention, treatment and care.<sup>5</sup> The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that approximately 18 percent of HIV-positive individuals do not know they are infected.<sup>6</sup> Knowledge of one's HIV status is important for preventing the spread of HIV; early detection and treatment reduce the individual's infectiousness and likelihood of infecting others.<sup>5, 7</sup> Testing provides an opportunity for people to receive counseling and information about risk reduction behaviors, regardless of HIV status. Early testing and treatment extend lives because HIV-positive individuals are able to take advantage of antiretroviral therapies.<sup>5, 7</sup>

How often you are tested for HIV depends on your circumstances.<sup>8</sup> If you are over 13 years old and have never been tested for HIV, you should be tested at least once. HIV testing is recommended for all pregnant females as part of prenatal screening tests, regardless of their age. The CDC recommends being tested at least once a year if you do things that can transmit HIV infection. These include:<sup>8, 9</sup>

- Injecting drugs or steroids with used injection equipment or “works”;
- Having sex for money or drugs;
- Having sex with an HIV-infected partner;
- Having more than one sexual partner since your last HIV test;
- Having a sexual partner who has had other sexual partners since your last HIV test.

If you have been tested for HIV, had a negative result and have not had any of the risks listed above, you and your health care provider can decide how often you need to be tested for HIV.

## Policymakers

The Oregon Healthy Authority (OHA) is currently working to streamline the HIV test consent process and normalize HIV testing as a routine health care practice for all Oregonians. In 2012, the Oregon legislature passed Senate Bill 1507, which removed the requirement for special informed consent for HIV testing and substituted a requirement that patients be notified that HIV testing is intended and given an opportunity to decline.<sup>10</sup> A work group is currently reviewing all Oregon Administrative Rules related to consent for HIV testing. When the administrative rules are finalized, OHA will provide guidance and take further action to help promote and implement these changes.

This policy change is expected to help address a number of barriers to testing (e.g., time, perceived low risk of HIV infection, stigma) that will ideally increase the proportion of Oregonians tested and decrease the proportion of late diagnoses. These efforts will help align Oregon's HIV test consent process more closely with CDC's 2006 Revised Recommendations for HIV Testing of Adults, Adolescents, and Pregnant Women in Health Care Settings.<sup>9</sup>

In Oregon, minors of any age can obtain confidential reproductive health services and HIV/STI testing without parental consent, as outlined in Oregon Revised Statutes 109.610 and 109.640.<sup>11,12</sup> Confidential and youth-friendly services increase the willingness of adolescents and young adults to seek health care, especially for issues related to sexual behavior and reproductive health.<sup>4</sup>



## Parents and guardians

Parents and guardians can play a vital role in promoting the health of their children. Parents and guardians can:

- Talk with their children about the importance of HIV prevention. The Body ([www.thebody.com/content/art2412.html](http://www.thebody.com/content/art2412.html)) has great resources on how to start the conversation about HIV in an age-appropriate context;
- Communicate with their children their expectations about obtaining reproductive health care, which include HIV testing when appropriate;
- Support their youth in obtaining reproductive health care;
- Understand that their children have the right to access HIV testing and treatment.

## Youth

A total of 48 percent of Oregon's 11th-grade students reported ever having sexual intercourse. Among those who reported being sexually active, 33 percent reported not using condoms at last sexual intercourse.<sup>13</sup> It is important that all youth have the knowledge and resources to practice safer sex if and when they become sexually active. Specifically, youth should be able to:

- Seek sexual and reproductive health information and services within their communities before deciding to become sexually active;
- Develop effective communication and negotiation skills to express sexual health decisions to partners;
- Develop short- and long-term goals that will help support their sexual health and avoid unintended pregnancies and HIV/STI infections;
- Commit to being tested for HIV and other STIs if sexually active.

## Oregon activities for HIV testing promotion

In 2012, the Oregon Health Authority Public Health HIV Prevention Program and its partners implemented new youth-friendly programs promoting HIV testing including:

- Automated text messages and emails every three to six months to remind priority populations (e.g., young males who have sex with males, intravenous drug users) to get tested for HIV and for HIV-infected clients to have their prescriptions refilled and take their HIV medications daily;
- Online videos to recruit and train volunteers to refer high-risk persons in their social networks to HIV testing;
- Website badges linking visitors of non-HIV-focused websites to HIV information and services;
- Social media campaigns (via Facebook and Twitter) that promote HIV testing for everyone aged 13–64, as recommended by the CDC<sup>9</sup>;
- Posters promoting HIV testing in community venues, such as libraries, universities and community centers.

For additional information, please find the OHA Public Health Division HIV Prevention Program on Facebook or follow the program on Twitter!



[www.facebook.com/Prevent.HIV.OR](http://www.facebook.com/Prevent.HIV.OR)



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# Resources

**The Body** ([www.thebody.com/index/hotlines/national.html](http://www.thebody.com/index/hotlines/national.html)) offers a comprehensive list of HIV/AIDS hotlines available in the United States. Also, the National HIV/STD hotline can be reached at 1-800-232-4636.

**Oregon Health Authority** (<http://public.health.oregon.gov/DiseasesConditions/HIVSTDViralHepatitis/HIVPrevention/Pages/index.aspx>) offers a comprehensive database of statewide testing centers as well as linkages to health care, housing assistance, mental health and substance abuse treatment centers, and other family planning services.

**211** ([211info.org](http://211info.org)) is a regional toll-free, health and social service helpline. Referrals for most health care needs, including reproductive health services, vaccine information and STIs, are available. Call 1-800-723-3638 or go to the 211info website.

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** ([www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/testing/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/testing/index.htm)) provides HIV testing basics, such as the various types of HIV tests available, HIV testing data and HIV testing recommendations for various populations.

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