

NEW JERSEY AIDS/HIV/STD HOTLINE

PRESS RELEASE

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Never Too Old to Worry about HIV and AIDS Know the Risks. Get the Facts. Have the Conversation.

(Newark, NJ) – Grace was dating again. George, a close family friend she had known for years, was starting to stay overnight more and more often. Because she wasn't worried about getting pregnant, Grace didn't think about using condoms. And because she had known George for so long, she didn't think to ask him about his sexual history. So, Grace was shocked when she tested positive for HIV.¹

Older adults who are having unprotected sex (oral, vaginal, or anal) share the same risk for HIV infection (the virus that causes AIDS) as those of younger generations. Risk does not decrease with age nor does it discriminate based on race, gender, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. So if you think HIV and AIDS are no longer a concern because you are over 50, think again.

A growing number of Americans over 50 are currently living with HIV and AIDS due to the success of HIV treatment which made it possible for infected individuals to live much longer and healthier lives. The number of HIV and AIDS cases among older adults continues to grow each year because there are still many more who are infected, but do not know of their infection. Late diagnosis is common in this populations for several reasons:

- Know less about risks, transmission, prevention, testing, etc.
- Less likely to get tested than younger generations.
- Do not perceive themselves at risk because it is viewed as a "young person's" disease.
- Not practicing "safe sex" because they feel they no longer have to worry about getting pregnant.
- Signs and symptoms can be mistaken for normal aches and pains of aging.
- Engage in sexual activity with multiple partners.
- Health care professionals and educators are less likely to bring up sexual history, drug use, practicing "safe sex" and HIV/AIDS prevention and testing. Many are shamed and afraid to be tested.
- More are sexually active due to access to erectile dysfunction and hormone replacements therapies making it possible to have a more active and enjoyable sex life.

The bottom line – older adults can contract and spread HIV and AIDS the same way as anyone else, either by having unprotected sex (oral, vaginal, or anal) with a man or woman who has HIV, sharing needles for injection drug use, or having any type of blood to blood contact with an infected person.

¹ "HIV, AIDS, and Older People." *Health and Aging*. National Institute on Aging, National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, April 2015. Web 7 December 2015.

<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/publication/hiv-aids-and-older-people>

Are you in a relationship either short or long-term? Have you talked about HIV in the context of that relationship? Do you know your HIV status as well as your partner's? Remember, one cannot tell if someone is infected with HIV and AIDS just by looking at that person. Many people who are HIV positive may not show symptoms for years. It is possible to be infected with HIV as well as a STI (Sexually Transmitted Infection) like syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia, herpes, genital warts and others.

KNOW YOUR HIV STATUS – GET OUT & GET TESTED

If you are sexually active, it's extremely important for you to learn how to reduce your risk for infection. Talk to your partner before having sex about their sexual history, HIV status, and getting tested together. Testing is the ONLY way to know for sure.

The NJ AIDS/HIV/STD hotline is a resource for anyone who is sexually active including older adults. If you are looking to find a free, state-funded testing site near you for initial testing, follow-up care, or have questions about HIV/AIDS, STDs, or hepatitis, contact us either by calling 800-624-2377, text/email at 8006242377@njpies.org, or chat via our site at www.njhivstdline.org; the hearing impaired may also use their TTY and call 973-926-8008. We are always here to help 24 hours a day/ 7 days a week! Calls are free and confidential.

Services available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, every day of the year

- Referrals for free, testing sites and other related services
- HIV/AIDS, STD and Hepatitis Prevention Information
- HIV Counseling and Treatment Locations
- HIV Treatment Information
- Referrals for free, clean needles/syringes

About NJPIES

As New Jersey's only poison control center, the New Jersey Poison Information & Education System provides information on poison prevention and treatments. Chartered in 1983, NJPIES provides free consultation through telephone hot line services and the Web. Medical professionals such as physicians, registered nurses and pharmacists offer confidential advice regarding poison emergencies and provide information on poison prevention, drugs, food poisoning, animal bites and more. These specialists are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

NJPIES coordinates state poison education and research and is designated as the regional poison center by the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services and the American Association of Poison Control Centers. It tracks incidences of adverse reactions to food, drugs and vaccines in order to monitor potential public health issues and provide data to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. A division of the Department of Emergency Medicine of the New Jersey Medical School of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. NJPIES has a state-of-the-art center located on the school's Newark campus. NJPIES is funded, in part, by the NJ Department of Health and the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

New Jersey residents seeking immediate information about treating poison emergencies, and those with any drug information questions, should call the toll-free hot line, **800-222-1222**, any time. The hearing impaired may call **973-926-8008**. For more information, visit www.njpies.org or call **973-972-9280**.

About Rutgers

Established in 1766, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, is America's eighth oldest institution of higher learning and one of the nation's premier public research universities. Serving more than 65,000 students on campuses, centers, institutes and other locations throughout the state, Rutgers is the only public university in New Jersey that is a member of the prestigious Association of American Universities.

Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences (RBHS) is the health care education, research, and clinical division of Rutgers University, comprising nine schools and their attendant faculty practices, centers, institutes and clinics; New Jersey's leading comprehensive cancer care center; and New Jersey's largest behavioral health care network.

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