

AIDS Foundation of Chicago Partners with Abbott to Launch Need2Know HIV, a New HIV Testing Campaign in Chicago

*Need2Know HIV campaign to spread word about
importance of early, ongoing and accurate testing.*

More than 20,000 people are living with HIV/AIDS in Chicago – three times the national prevalence rate.

In some Chicago neighborhoods, HIV rates have climbed to a staggering 53 percent in recent years.

That's why the AIDS Foundation of Chicago (AFC) is marking this World AIDS Day by announcing a new campaign called **Need2Know HIV**, an initiative to educate people about the importance of HIV testing.

In partnership with Abbott, a Chicago-headquartered global health care company, AFC is using social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to increase awareness and encourage conversation about testing. The campaign began on World AIDS Day, December 1, and continues through the month.

What sets **Need2Know HIV** apart from other HIV testing campaigns? It highlights the importance of diagnosing HIV in its earliest stages, as well as ongoing viral load molecular testing for those living with HIV.

Unfortunately, many HIV-positive people are not diagnosed in the early phase of the disease — when they are most contagious — and unknowingly spread the virus to others. Testing is critical to stopping the spread of HIV, though many people are not getting tested and may not realize significant advances in testing technology that are now available.

“It's simple: we can't end AIDS without a stronger commitment to HIV testing, and that starts with educating people about the importance of testing to know their status and manage HIV,” said David Ernesto Munar, AFC president/CEO.

People can show their support and educate others by visiting and “liking” the **Need2Know HIV** campaign on Facebook, Munar said.

New diagnostic testing allows individuals to know within two weeks of exposure if they are infected. The newest HIV combo tests can detect both antigens (the actual HIV virus) and antibodies to HIV (the body's response to fight the virus). HIV combo tests allow people to know their status weeks sooner than they potentially could with traditional antibody-only HIV tests.

For those individuals who live with HIV, monitoring the disease plays a key role in their overall treatment. Ongoing viral load molecular tests help patients and their health care providers monitor the response of the virus to antiretroviral drug treatments, helping to guide treatment decisions.

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Earlier detection provides information to help people make decisions that may reduce risky behavior. It also allows people who are HIV positive to start on antiretroviral therapy sooner, which benefits long-term health and may also reduce HIV transmission rates by 96 percent.

“For nearly 30 years, Abbott has been committed to fighting HIV by developing important tests and therapies for patients,” said Brian Blaser, executive vice president, Diagnostics Products, Abbott. “Our commitment to HIV continues today as we partner together to launch efforts such as **Need2Know HIV** to help educate people about the critical role testing can play in stemming the tide of this virus.”

People can learn more by visiting the AFC’s [website](#) and [Facebook page](#).

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Founded in 1985 by community activists and physicians, the AIDS Foundation of Chicago is a catalyst for local, national, and international action against HIV/AIDS.