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# City Offers Free HIV Tests

Appointments Available for National HIV Testing Day, June 27

**EL PASO, Texas** – As a part of the National HIV Testing Day, the City of El Paso Department of Public Health is encouraging residents to know their HIV status by signing up for **free HIV rapid tests on Saturday, June 27, 2020** at the HIV Prevention Program located at 701 Montana Avenue.

Anyone interested should call (915) 212-6665 to schedule an appointment.

This year's theme, "Knowing," is especially important when it comes to reducing infection, as more than 2,200 El Paso County residents live with HIV.

While the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) notes that there is currently no specific information about the risk of COVID-19 in people with HIV, they do point out that older adults and people of any age who have a serious underlying medical condition might be at higher risk for severe illness. That includes those who are immunocompromised.

"We want people to realize that knowing your HIV status, your risk, your prevention options, and knowing your treatment options can save not only your life but those who you come into contact with," said Irene Ovalle-Valdez, HIV Prevention Program Manager. "Unlike the current COVID-19 pandemic, those who find out that they are HIV positive have several treatment options that can make a huge difference when it comes to fighting the virus."

The risk for people with HIV becoming very sick is greatest in those with a low white blood cell count, and those who are not on HIV treatment (antiretroviral therapy or ART).

All protective measures against COVID-19 (social distancing, wearing a mask, etc.) will be strictly observed during this campaign. The program is also conducting curbside condom distribution for prevention.

According to the CDC, An estimated 1.1 million people in the United States had HIV at the end of 2016, the most recent year for which this information is available. Of those people, about 14%, or 1 in 7, did not know they had HIV.

For more information on the HIV Prevention program, call 2-1-1 or visit [www.EPHealth.com](http://www.EPHealth.com) or [www.EPSalud.com](http://www.EPSalud.com).

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