

HIV, STD, & Viral Hepatitis Program
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2012 National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day Fact Sheet



- Women make up a quarter of all new HIV infections in Maine and in the U.S.
- Every 35 minutes, a woman tests positive for HIV in the U.S.
- In 2010, 16% of people living with HIV in Maine were women.
- Women and girls of color—especially black women and girls—bear a disproportionately heavy burden of HIV/AIDS.
 - In 2007, for female adults and adolescents, the rate of HIV/AIDS diagnoses for black females was nearly 20 times as high as the rate for white females and nearly 4 times as high as the rate for Hispanic/Latino females.
 - Relatively few cases were diagnosed among Asian, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander females, although the rates for these groups were higher than the rate for white females.
- Women and girls are most likely to become infected with HIV from unprotected sex with an infected male partner or by sharing unclean needles while injecting drugs.

Women have unique issues and special challenges that make it harder for them to prevent HIV or take care of themselves if they have HIV:

- Women's bodies are different. A woman is twice as likely as a man to get HIV infection during vaginal sex (because the lining of the vagina provides a large area of potential exposure to HIV-infected semen). Some diseases or disorders unique to women make HIV more serious.
- Women can give HIV to their babies. Women who have HIV can give it to their babies during pregnancy, delivery, or breast-feeding.
- Women may lack control in relationships: they may be scared to refuse sex or insist that their partner use a condom, or can't talk to their partner about abstinence, faithfulness, or using condoms.

- Women may not know if their partner is doing things that put him (and therefore her) at risk for HIV.
- Women may not earn much money, which makes it hard for them to pay doctors or even get a ride to their doctor appointments. In extreme instances, some women even end up trading sex for money or drugs.
- Women may be caregivers for others and not feel they have the time to take care of themselves or are unable to find someone to take care of their loved ones when they want to access services.

What can providers do?

- Emphasize and make HIV testing a routine part of health care. Integrate HIV testing into reproductive health care and other key services.
- Reach out and educate, especially among young women and women of color. Many women want more information and are most likely to get it from doctors, other women with HIV/AIDS, the Internet, television, and radio.
- Decrease mother-to-child transmission by testing, educating, and treating.
- Prevent new infections by working with HIV-infected partners.
- Improve access to care and support services for women, as well as support women's roles as caregivers and mothers.

Among women living with HIV/AIDS:

- The time of diagnosis is a critical moment to inform, support, and connect women with HIV/AIDS to services.
- Referring women with HIV/AIDS to experienced HIV/AIDS providers (including dentists) may lead to better care.
- Mental health services can play an important role for women with HIV/AIDS.
- The availability of Medicaid and AIDS Drug Assistance Programs may help low-income women with HIV/AIDS connect to the care and services they need.
- Women often place the needs of their family above their own health needs.
- Women with HIV/AIDS have needs beyond medical care.
 - Child care
 - Transportation to care and treatment services

For more information, visit the following sites:

Maine CDC HIV, STD, and Viral Hepatitis Program: <http://www.MainePublicHealth.gov/HIV>

Maine CDC - Ask for the Test: <http://askforthetest.org>

National Women and Girls' HIV/AIDS Awareness Day: <http://www.womenshealth.gov/nwghaad/>

WomensHealth.gov – HIV: <http://www.womenshealth.gov/hiv/>

Centers for Disease Control: <http://cdc.gov/hiv/topics/women/index.htm>

AIDS.gov: <http://www.aids.gov>

The Body HIV/AIDS Resource Center for Women: <http://www.thebody.com/content/art44411.html>

Nine and a Half Minutes: <http://www.nineandahalfminutes.org/>