



First Nations Health Authority
Health through wellness



Interior Health
Every person matters

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Sexy Health Includes Knowing Your HIV Status

Knowing your HIV status is an important part of a healthy sex life and a good relationship.

The First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) is partnering with Interior Health on a campaign that aims to destigmatize HIV and AIDS and encourage all First Nations and Aboriginal peoples, along with all sexually active adults in the region, to get an HIV test.

The partnership between the two health authorities is part of the “My Health Is Sexy” campaign, a public awareness campaign launched by Interior Health on World AIDS Day last year to promote HIV testing. It is estimated that approximately 3,500 people in BC are living with HIV but are unaware of their status. The FNHA supports frequent HIV testing for all First Nations and Aboriginal people in BC to determine their status, and to ensure those living with HIV are engaged with care providers who will help them access and benefit from treatment.

“We are very pleased to partner with FNHA on this phase of the My Health is Sexy campaign. Aboriginal people are disproportionately affected by HIV in many of our communities,” said Dr. Trevor Corneil, Chief Medical Health Officer for Interior Health and Physician Lead for the My Health is Sexy campaign. “By working together with FNHA and our Aboriginal partners we hope to inspire Aboriginal people to be proactive by requesting an HIV test and for those who are living with HIV to achieve wellness through treatment.”

A positive HIV result is not what it used to be. Early diagnosis and treatment of HIV can improve overall health, prevent the transmission of HIV to another person, and is available for all at no cost. Although there is no cure for HIV, there are medications that when taken as prescribed will help people live longer, healthier lives.

“Even if you’re in an established relationship, an HIV test is a good chance to check in with your mate, your doctor and yourself. It should be a routine part of your health care,” said Dr. Evan Adams, Chief Medical Officer with the First Nations Health Authority. “It is important that we start the conversation about HIV. First Nations peoples need to know it is preventable and treatable - it starts with talking about it, getting a test and if necessary accessing treatment.”

The FNHA urges health-care providers to take Indigenous Cultural Competency training as an initial step in beginning to deliver culturally safe health services, and to ensure testing, follow up, and treatment is carried out in an effective way. Efforts by health-care practitioners will help to achieve culturally safe and appropriate routine HIV testing, connection to treatment, and retention in care to offer a higher quality of care for First Nations in BC.

It is equally important that once engaged in care, First Nations and Aboriginal peoples are assisted in addressing the barriers that may prevent them from continuing to remain in care. Referrals and access to support services can be a key factor as to whether the person continues on treatment and achieves optimal viral load suppression. Research has shown that an early diagnosis in combination with sustained antiretroviral therapy means HIV-positive people can expect to live up to an additional five-and-a-half decades. In addition, sustained treatment can greatly reduce the likelihood of HIV transmission.

The “My Health is Sexy” campaign is a part of the Province’s Seek and Treat for Optimal Prevention of HIV/AIDS (STOP HIV/AIDS) program. Since Interior Health launched the STOP HIV/AIDS program, testing in the region has increased by 32 per cent. Health outreach nurses are available across the Interior Health region to provide discreet and confidential HIV testing by calling 1-866-778-7736.

Information about HIV, testing, and the My Health Is Sexy campaign is available at www.myhealthissexy.com.

HIV and AIDS – Did You Know?

HIV is Preventable:

- Know your HIV status
- Use condoms
- Talk to new partners about HIV prevention
- Get tested during pregnancy
- If you are using injection drugs, use new equipment every time (new needles and syringes)

About Treatment:

- Early treatment improves health
- With treatment, women living with HIV can have healthy babies
- Beginning treatment is a decision an individual makes with their doctor
- Good nutrition, rest, exercise and other stress relievers help build a healthy immune system

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