

# HEALTH ADVISORY



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

## **REGION IV PUBLIC HEALTH**

Clark, Cowlitz, Skamania, Wahkiakum  
counties and Cowlitz Tribe

**To: Physicians and other health care providers**

**Please distribute a copy of this information to each provider  
in your organization.**

Questions regarding this information may be directed to the following Region IV health officers:

**Alan Melnick, MD, MPH, CPH**

Clark County Public Health, 360.397.8412

Skamania County Community Health, 509.427.3850

Cowlitz County Health & Human Services, 360.414.5599

Wahkiakum County Health & Human Services, 360.795.6207

**Steven Krager, MD, MPH**

Clark County Public Health, 360.397.8412

Skamania County Community Health, 509.427.3850

Cowlitz County Health & Human Services, 360.414.5599

Wahkiakum County Health & Human Services, 360.795.6207

### **Alert categories:**

**Health Alert:** conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

**Health Advisory:** provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

**Health Update:** provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; no immediate action necessary.

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**HEALTH  
ADVISORY**  
Nov. 26, 2019

**Health care providers urged to take  
action to help prevent HIV**



**Summary**

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World AIDS Day is Sunday, Dec. 1. Each year, organizations and individuals across the world bring attention to the HIV epidemic, endeavor to increase HIV awareness and knowledge, speak out against HIV stigma, and call for an increased response to move toward [Ending the HIV Epidemic: A Plan for America](#).

The theme for the 2019 observance is “Ending the HIV/AIDS Epidemic: Community by Community.”

**Requested action**

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Washington State Department of Health and Region IV health officers request health care providers take the following actions:

**Assess and evaluate patients for HIV risk factors:**

- Elicit behavioral risk history including injection drug use, transactional sex, methamphetamine use, unstable housing/homelessness. [Click this link](#) for information on taking a comprehensive sexual history.
- Asymptomatic people who inject drugs should be tested for HIV, hepatitis C, and syphilis at least annually. For current national recommendations for [routine HIV](#) and [hepatitis C](#) testing, click the links. For information on increases in syphilis among people who inject drugs, [click here](#).
- All people who inject drugs who present with symptoms consistent with acute HIV infection (e.g., fever, fatigue, myalgia, headache, pharyngitis, adenopathy) should be tested for HIV.
- Persons at high risk for HIV infection should be screened for HIV at least annually.

**Promptly report new cases of HIV infection to your local health department.**

Provide as much risk history, clinical, and demographic data (including complete contact information for the patient) as you can obtain. In Clark County, call 564.397.8082 to report a new case of HIV infection. To report a new case of HIV infection in Cowlitz, Skamania and Wahkiakum counties, [visit this link](#).

**Link all people recently diagnosed or living with untreated HIV to care for full evaluation, follow up, and prompt initiation of antiretroviral therapy.**

Focused efforts should be made to optimize treatment adherence and retain patients in care. The Washington State Department of Health and Clark County Public Health provide services to help people at risk for HIV and people living with HIV access medication, medical care, and support to improve their health. In Clark County, call 564.397.8082 for more information. In Cowlitz, Skamania and Wahkiakum counties, call 877.376.9316 or [visit this link](#).

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**Offer HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) to people without HIV who are at higher risk of HIV infection.**

This includes those who inject drugs, those with a HIV-positive sexual partner, or those who have anal sex without a condom or engage in other higher risk sexual activities. For information on PrEP in Washington state, [visit this link](#).

**Offer post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) to those who think they may have been exposed to HIV through sharing needles or sex within 72 hours of exposure.**

**If needed, request support for HIV partner notification and linkage to support services and insurance.**

In Clark County, call 564.397.8082. In Cowlitz, Skamania and Wahkiakum counties, call the Washington State Department of Health's Office of Infectious Disease at 360.236.3425 or [visit this link](#) to be referred to a field service consultant serving your region.

**Provide people who inject drugs with information about where to access sterile injection equipment.**

For a current listing of syringe service programs in Washington state, [click here](#). [Clark County Public Health](#) and [Cowlitz Family Health Center](#) provide services in their respective counties.

**Provide information about substance use treatment programs, including information about availability of medication assisted therapies, to patients interested in reducing or ceasing drug use.**

For a current listing of substance use treatment programs in Washington state, visit the [WA Recovery Helpline](#).

**Educate people who inject drugs about the availability of naloxone to prevent overdose death.**

Opioid overdose death is preventable with naloxone. Visit [this link](#) for more information about naloxone, including where people can access it.

***Background***

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HIV remains a significant public health issue. The number of new HIV cases in Washington (n=402 in 2018) has remained stable in recent years. By the end of 2018, an estimated 14,000 people were living with HIV across the state, of which approximately 91 percent have been diagnosed. Roughly three out of four living cases of HIV infection in Washington appear to be receiving optimal HIV medical care.

Most new HIV transmissions occur by persons not currently on HIV treatment (see table). Early and aggressive treatment can greatly reduce the risk of HIV transmission.

HIV TRANSMISSIONS IN 2016		
% OF PEOPLE WITH HIV	STATUS OF CARE	ACCOUNTED FOR X% OF NEW TRANSMISSIONS*
<b>15%</b>	didn't know they had HIV	<b>38%</b>
<b>23%</b>	knew they had HIV but weren't in care	<b>43%</b>
<b>11%</b>	in care but not virally suppressed	<b>20%</b>
<b>51%</b>	taking HIV medicine and virally suppressed	<b>0%</b>

\*Values do not equal 100% because of rounding

HIV transmission can also be prevented by PrEP. [Studies have shown](#) that PrEP reduces the risk of getting HIV from sex by about 99 percent when taken daily. Among people who inject drugs, PrEP reduces the risk of getting HIV by at least 74 percent when taken daily.

More than 700,000 American lives have been lost to HIV since 1981. More than 1.1 million Americans are currently living with HIV and many more are at risk of HIV infection. While new HIV diagnoses have declined significantly from their peak, progress on further reducing them has stalled with an estimated 40,000 Americans being newly diagnosed each year. Without intervention another 400,000 Americans will be newly diagnosed over 10 years despite the available tools to prevent infections.

The U.S. government spends \$20 billion in annual direct health expenditures for HIV prevention and care.

There is a real risk of HIV resurgence due to several factors, including injection drug use and diagnostic complacency among health care providers.

**Thank you for your partnership.**

LHJ	Phone	Fax
Clark County Public Health	564.397.8182	360.397.8080
Cowlitz County Health Department	360.414.5599	360.425.7531
Skamania County Community Health	509.427.3850	509.427.0188
Wahkiakum County Health and Human Services	360.795.6207	360.795.6143

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