



Public Health
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Region IV Public Health
Clark, Cowlitz, Skamania, Wahkiakum counties
and Cowlitz Tribe

Health Update

Please deliver a copy of the following update to each provider in your organization.

Thank you

Questions regarding this alert may be directed to the office of:

Alan Melnick, MD, MPH
Health Officer

Clark County Public Health
Cowlitz County Health Department
Skamania County Health Department
Wahkiakum County Department of Health and Human Services
(360) 397-8412

Please Distribute

Categories of Health Alert messages:

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

Health Advisory: provides important information for specific incident for 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 UPDATE

March 12, 2013

TO: Physicians and Other Health Care Providers

FROM: Alan Melnick, MD, MPH, CPH, Health Officer

RE: **Routine HIV testing essential to reducing HIV transmission**
Providers are not responsible for pre- and post-test counseling

Although many providers now routinely provide HIV testing for their patients, others do not out of unfounded concerns that HIV testing requires providers to obtain special consent and provide pre- and post-test counseling. To correct these misunderstandings we wish to remind all health care providers of the CDC's 2010 recommendations, which have been adopted by the Washington Department of Health.

The CDC now recommends routine testing of all patients 13 to 64 years old without regard to their risk of infection. To encourage routine testing, the CDC recommends that states reduce barriers to physicians by including consent for HIV tests as part of general consent for other routine tests and by eliminating requirements that physicians conduct pre-test counseling.

In January, 2010, the Washington State Board of Health adopted these recommendations into Washington Administrative Code. The revisions shift responsibility for counseling and partner notification to the local health officer and local health jurisdiction. Although providers must give patients HIV test results (as they would for other tests), they can refer patients testing positive to their local health jurisdiction for counseling. We recommend providers post the attached algorithm in their clinics.

Testing is essential to reducing HIV transmission. About 25% of people infected with HIV are unaware of their HIV status. There is plenty of evidence that the earlier people with HIV receive treatment, the better their outcomes. Additionally, treating a patient early can lower his or her viral load and reduce the likelihood of transmission to others.

HIV infection must be reported to local health departments. To report cases, please call:

- Clark County Public Health: 360-397-8440.
- Cowlitz County Health Department: (360) 414-5599
- Skamania County Community Health: (509) 427-3850
- Wahkiakum County Health and Human Services (360) 795-6207

HIV Testing Information for Medical Providers

Washington State Department of Health • Revised State Regulations • 2010

Over 1 million individuals are estimated to be infected with HIV in the United States, about 25 percent of whom do not know their diagnosis.¹ Current data demonstrate an unacceptably high rate of delayed diagnosis.^{2,3}

In September 2006, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention revised recommendations to include routine testing of all patients 13 to 64 years old without regard to the patient's known risk for infection. They also recommended that state rules reduce testing barriers for physicians by including consent for HIV tests as part of general consent for other routine tests, and by eliminating requirements that physicians conduct pre-test counseling.⁴

Beginning January 1, 2010, the Washington State Board of Health adopted these recommendations into Washington Administrative Code, Chapter 246-100.⁵ The revisions shift responsibility for counseling and partner notification to the local health officer and local health jurisdiction.

(See endnotes on back)

