



PUTNAM COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

1 Geneva Road, Brewster, NY 10509 ■ 845-808-1390
www.putnamcountyny.gov/health

A PHAB-ACCREDITED HEALTH DEPARTMENT

MaryEllen Odell
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Michael J. Nesheiwat, MD
COMMISSIONER OF HEALTH

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: June 6, 2019

Contact: Susan Hoffner, Public Information Officer, (845) 808-1390

PCDOH Offers Free HIV Testing on June 27; *1 in 7 people in the U.S. don't know they have HIV*

BREWSTER, NY— According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) 1 in 7 people in the U.S. don't know they have HIV. In 2017 there were over 2,500 new HIV diagnoses in New York State and 57 HIV or AIDS-related deaths in the Lower Hudson Valley alone. These statistics serve as reminders that HIV remains a public health challenge and the only way to know your HIV status is to get tested. National HIV Testing Day takes place each year on June 27— to encourage people of all ages to get tested. Early detection is critical and can lead to better treatment results and prevent transmission to others. This year the Putnam County Department of Health will again be offering free HIV testing on Thursday, June 27, at the main health department office at 1 Geneva Road in Brewster from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

“We can make dying of AIDS a thing of the past,” says County Executive MaryEllen Odell. “If we make HIV testing a routine part of basic health care then you can start treatment earlier and it can help you live a longer, healthier life.”

“Untreated HIV, which stands for human immunodeficiency virus, can affect anyone regardless of age, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity or gender. It usually causes AIDS, often a fatal disease. Many people with HIV don't have any symptoms. In fact, nearly 40% of new HIV infections are transmitted by people who do not even know they have the virus,” says Putnam County Health Commissioner Michael J. Nesheiwat, MD. “And while we know the burden of HIV is heaviest in NYC, 22% of New Yorkers with diagnosed HIV reside outside of the five boroughs.”

The CDC recommends that everyone between the ages of 13 and 64 get tested for HIV at least once as part of routine health care. For those with specific risk factors, the CDC recommends getting tested at least once a year. In the U.S. there are 1.1 million people living with HIV, and of those, approximately 165,000 people are living with HIV but don't know they have it. Even if you don't feel sick, getting early treatment for HIV is important. Treatment with antiretroviral therapy, known as ART, lowers the “viral load” which is the level of HIV in the blood. This reduces HIV-related illness, and lowers the risk of transmitting HIV to others.

Free HIV testing and counseling will be offered by the Putnam County Department of Health on June 27 with results ready in just 20 minutes. No appointments are necessary, and privacy and confidentiality are ensured. Free condoms, giveaways and educational information will be available. For those who are busy on June 27, or wish to be tested at a different time, the health department offers free testing throughout the year as well. The walk-in clinic hours are on Tuesdays from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. and on Thursdays from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. Other options include getting tested by a personal health care provider or at the federally qualified health center Open Door Brewster. For questions or concerns about scheduling a test, or for more

information about HIV testing or HIV/AIDS education and prevention, contact the health department at (845) 808-1390.

The mission of the Putnam County Department of Health, nationally accredited by the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB), is to improve and protect the health of the Putnam County community, composed of nearly 100,000 residents. Core services include community health assessment, disease surveillance and control, emergency preparedness, environmental health protection, family health promotion and health education. For more information, please visit our County website at www.putnamcountyny.com; or visit our social media sites on Facebook at www.facebook.com/putnamhealth and Twitter @PutnamHealthNY.

###