

## Young and old at risk for HIV infection

Betty had been on her own many years when she started dating a friend from church. They started spending more and more time together and then decided to get married. Betty was past menopause, so she wasn't worried about getting pregnant or using condoms. Recently, their family doctor suggested that the couple get tested at a routine checkup. They were stunned to learn that they both tested positive for HIV. Betty and her husband had never imagined that they were at risk. The good news is that they were diagnosed early, before the HIV virus had progressed to AIDS. Their care providers expect that they will do well on HIV treatment and lead active, healthy lives.

Most people have heard a lot about HIV and AIDS. Durham's rates of HIV and AIDS have been troubling for many years. In 2007, Durham County had 1,200 people living with HIV or AIDS, and had the fifth highest rate in the state. Many people think that HIV is something that young people need to be concerned about, but they may be surprised to learn that the rate of HIV infections has been growing every year among older members of the community.

Currently, about 19% of all people with HIV/AIDS in the United States are age 50 and older. This number reflects a combination of people over 50 who have been recently diagnosed with HIV, as well as people who have been living with the virus for decades since improved treatments are helping people with HIV live longer.

Diane Zablotsky at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte found that older women appear to be especially poorly informed about HIV transmission and risks. In an analysis of National Health Interview data, she found that almost half of women older than 50 were totally uninformed about HIV, compared with only 14 percent of younger adults.

In 2006, the CDC recommended that HIV screening become a routine part of health care. This change is gradually being adopted in many health care settings. Still, providers may not think to test middle aged or older people for HIV/AIDS and often don't ask their mature patients about their sex lives or talk with them about HIV prevention.

People of any age may be at risk if they are sexually active and do not use a latex or polyurethane condom and if they do not know their partner's HIV status. One risky scenario is when one partner is monogamous and incorrectly believes that the other partner is as well. What you don't know can hurt you, and knowledge *is* powerful. People may feel uncomfortable at first discussing condom use or getting tested for HIV, but it gets easier with practice.

Project StraightTalk at the Durham County Health Department offers classes for people to help them improve their ability to communicate with their partners about condom use and safer sex. Health care providers and health educators can be good resources for those who want to learn more – and there is a lot of information available at the Durham County Library as well as on the internet.

People can access free or low-cost HIV testing at several locations, which are listed in the clip and save. Testing outreach events take place around the county throughout the year, such as National HIV Testing Day, health fairs, and community events.

It is critical that individuals who test positive for HIV get linked to healthcare immediately in order to avoid losing valuable years of treatment that could extend their lives. Another problem with living undiagnosed is the risk of unknowingly infecting others.

People of all ages need to learn the facts about HIV and AIDS, how to protect themselves and prevent infection, as well as to have access to treatment and testing services.

## **Clip ‘n’ Save**

How is HIV transmitted?

- Through any kind of sexual contact – vaginal, oral, or anal
- Through sharing needles
- From an infected mother to her child during pregnancy or while breastfeeding

How can you prevent HIV infection?

- Safer sexual practices – abstinence, only have one partner, or use condoms every time you have sex
- Get tested – know your status and your partners’ status
- Don’t share needles, or clean your works every time you use them
- Pregnant women should be tested for HIV – mother to child transmission can be avoided through medications

### HIV Testing Locations by Zip code

[www.hivtest.org/search/result.cfm](http://www.hivtest.org/search/result.cfm)

### HIV Testing and Services in Durham

Durham County Health Department – testing, prevention education, condom education classes, community testing

414 E.Main St, 560-7600

Lincoln Community Health Center’s Early Intervention Clinic – testing, case management, and medical care

Located at the Health Department, 414 E. Main St, 560-7726

Lincoln Community Health Center, 1301 Fayetteville Ave

Planned Parenthood of Central North Carolina – testing, prevention education

105 Newson St., 286-2872

CAARE, Inc – services for HIV positive people, testing

205 Broadway St., 683-5300

AIDS Alliance Services of the Carolinas – services for HIV positive people, prevention education, testing

1810 E. Main St., 596-9898

New Outlook Second Chance - services for HIV positive people

331 W Main St., Suite 305, 682-4771

AIDS Community Residence Association – housing for HIV positive people  
956-7901

Duke Infectious Disease Clinic – testing, treatment, social work services  
200 Trent Dr, Clinic 2 J, 681-6261

Duke Partners In Caring – testing, peer education, pastoral care, prevention education and peer  
education training

Duke University Medical Center, DUMC 3112, 684-3211

Duke Outpatient Clinic – rapid testing  
4220 N. Roxboro Rd., 471-8344

The Partnership for a Healthy Durham is the Healthy Carolinians planning team for Durham and serves as the Health Committee for the City and County's Results-Based Accountability initiative. The Access to Care Committee is responsible for this series of articles. For more information on the Partnership, see [www.healthydurham.org](http://www.healthydurham.org) or call 560-7833.