

## **National HIV Testing Week and World AIDS Day 2015**



As we enter National HIV Testing Week (21<sup>st</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> November) Dhiverse would like to remind everyone that in the UK where treatments are free and effective, around 40% of new HIV diagnoses are late – that is, diagnoses after the best possible time to start treatment. People are dying because they are diagnosed with HIV infection too late. Being diagnosed late increases the risk of death within a year tenfold – so it's absolutely crucial that anyone who thinks they might have been exposed to HIV takes a HIV test promptly.

Just some of the reasons that people test late are fear of the unknown, misinformation, misunderstanding and the stigma and prejudice which still surrounds HIV. These can all act as barriers to people taking a HIV test. There are over 110,000 people in the UK who are HIV and 1 in 4 are unaware of their status. At Dhiverse we are working hard to challenge the issues that prevent people taking a test and we want to see a time when HIV is normalized and it's seen as a long term condition which can affect anyone.

HIV tests are free, confidential, and accurate! You can book a test at any sexual health clinic and at Dhiverse we offer 'Insti' HIV tests at our office in Dales Brewery and in some other setting i.e. universities, colleges and some community events. An 'Insti' test is a finger prick blood test with the result in 60 seconds. Although the thought of taking a test and getting a positive result might be a daunting and worrying prospect for many of us, it really is better to know. If you are HIV positive but you don't know then you could unknowingly pass on the virus to someone else and you will also be denying yourself access to free and effective treatment. If you receive a prompt diagnosis then you will receive the necessary treatment and care and you can carry on living your life as normal. If you take a test and its negative then you have peace of mind and you can take steps and access support to ensure you remain negative.

So if you, or anyone you know, are at all worried about HIV or would like more information on testing and where you can get a test just give us a call on **01223 508805** or email us at [info@dihiverse.org.uk](mailto:info@dihiverse.org.uk) - all contact with us is confidential. To book an instant HIV test with Dihiverse call or email us and we will aim to give you an appointment within 48 hours (often within 24 hours); please note our testing service is open Monday to Thursday 9.30am to 6pm. Tests are done in a safe and relaxed setting and if you want to, you can talk to us and ask as many questions as you want, both before and afterwards. Alternatively, you can get a test and information through your sexual health clinic; **call 0300 300 3030 for details.**

At Dihiverse we also offer a range of support for people living with and affected by HIV and we provide workshops for anyone wanting to know more about HIV.

National HIV Testing Week leads into World AIDS Day, which is on the 1<sup>st</sup> December. World AIDS day is a chance for us to reflect on the HIV epidemic globally, nationally, locally, and in the context of our own personal lives. It offers an opportunity to remember those who lost their lives during the epidemic and more recently, and to celebrate the lives of those who are living with HIV and challenging the stigma and prejudice which still surround the virus. In fact, the theme of World AIDS Day 2015 is 'THINK POSITIVE – RE-THINK HIV' with the aim of challenging people to rethink outdated stereotypes, challenge myths and be positive about HIV. Those among us who can still remember the National HIV campaigns of the 1980s and 90s - the icebergs, volcanoes, and tottering tombstones - might not be aware of just how effective current treatments can be, and of the more 'mundane', but crucial, issues which affect the daily lives of people living with HIV: choosing the right drug regime, coping with the stigma which still exists, grappling with issues around housing and benefits. Dihiverse fully supports the work of the National AIDS Trust and the 2015 'THINK POSITIVE – RE-THINK HIV' campaign. HIV doesn't discriminate but people do and we need this to change.

To show your support you can: wear a RED RIBBON, like us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter, send your thoughts, comments and stories to us at [info@dhiverse.org.uk](mailto:info@dhiverse.org.uk) giving us your consent to publish it on our website in our new 'Think Positive' area for January. Anything published will be done so with anonymity but if you would like your name to be included we'd welcome it.

To find out more about our National HIV Testing Week and World AIDS Day activities visit our website at [www.dhiverse.org.uk](http://www.dhiverse.org.uk) or check out our Facebook page.

Join us in supporting everyone who is living with HIV and helping to put an end to the stigma and prejudice which still surrounds HIV.

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