



HIV testing in countries of the Eastern Mediterranean Region is available mostly through public health facilities and nongovernmental organizations. Encouragingly, community-based testing programmes are operating in an increasing number in some countries. 30 November 2017 – The focus of World AIDS Day 2017 is to advocate for HIV testing with the aim of encouraging the general public to seek HIV testing, urge people living with HIV to be aware of their infection and therefore seek treatment, support country efforts in scaling up demand and to promote the different approaches to HIV testing that are recommended by WHO.

The World AIDS Day slogan is: HIV is treatable, test for HIV. It is being marked this year in the Eastern Mediterranean Region by the progress towards ending AIDS by 2030 as one of the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals that countries have endorsed and to which they have committed regionally and across the world.

“The Eastern Mediterranean Region has witnessed progress in HIV surveillance, prevention, treatment and care,” noted Dr Jaouad Mahjour, acting WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean. “Between 2012 and 2016 the number of people living with HIV (PLHIV)

receiving antiretroviral treatment increased steadily to more than double in number. In spite of this progress, the epidemic is still growing in the Region. Our Region features the lowest coverage of HIV prevention, diagnosis, treatment and care services in the world,” he elaborated.

Eighty-five per cent (85%) of people living with HIV in the Region who need life-saving antiretroviral therapy do not receive it. This is attributed partially to the fact that about 70% of PLHIV in our Region are not aware of their infection and, consequently, do not demand antiretroviral therapy though they need it to save their lives. However, HIV testing in countries of the Region is available mostly through public health facilities and nongovernmental organizations. Encouragingly, community-based testing programmes are operating in an increasing number in some countries. Pakistan, Egypt, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Morocco and Sudan have been working on increasing testing services through running community testing services for key populations and in locations where the HIV risk is high. In Morocco, the application of diverse a diversity of approaches has resulted in 63% of PLHIV knowing their HIV status. In Sudan, focusing HIV testing in health care settings has contributed to increasing the efficiency of testing.

On the occasion of the World AIDS Day, WHO calls on individuals to seek HIV testing.

Key messages

- HIV testing is for your own benefit. When you know your HIV status you can make informed decisions regarding prevention and treatment.
- HIV is treatable. A HIV-positive test result is no longer a death sentence. People living with HIV can live long healthy lives with the appropriate treatment.

To take an HIV test, you can use a wide range of services. You might be offered the test by your health care provider or you may seek testing yourself in health facilities, in mobile testing services or in community organizations that offer HIV prevention and diagnosis services. Recently, HIV self-tests have become available for those who would like to test in their own privacy at their convenience. If you use a self-test and test HIV negative, most likely you are HIV negative. If your result is positive, don't panic: go to the nearest health facility and ask for a HIV test to confirm your result.

We hope that our campaign for this year and advocating for HIV testing will encourage more people to do the test. Test for HIV and seek your treatment.

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