The Importance of HIV/STD Testing

June 11, 2022 By Shawn Decker

A lot of times when people delay getting tested for HIV and STDs, it is because of the stigma. Or simply not wanting to know the actual answer to a question that your brain cannot seem to turn off. But the reasons for knowing your status should trump your fears, because testing is the starting point necessary in keeping you healthy. There have been so many advances in HIV treatment over the years, and now we know that if you are on effective treatment that it is impossible to transmit the virus.

I'll share some of my personal history with testing, just to provide some context and share some skin in the game since I'm advocating for people- who may be reticent with regard to testing- to step outside of their comfort zone.

As a kid, I was in a high risk group for HIV in the 1980s because of my reliance on blood product treatments due to having hemophilia. One day my parents got me tested and it came back positive. My life, of course, changed. But as a minor the decision to get tested was my parents, and they weren't going to tell me it had even happened if the result came back negative. In that regard, I had it easy when it came to getting tested.

Fast forward to young adulthood- I'm in my early 20s and I meet and fall in love with a fellow HIV educator, Gwenn, who is HIV negative. We begin educating as a couple, encouraging open dialogue about sex, testing and healthy relationships. Even though we'd been practicing safe sex, the first time Gwenn did an at home HIV test we were both nervous. And we were educators! Intellectually, we knew that she hadn't been exposed to the virus. But still, the stories of the the surprise positive results that float around lingered. The test was negative- we were not only relieved but also became better educators moving forward, because we shared how that test affected us. It really helped us relate and empathize with people who can't quite bring themselves to get tested.

My hope is that if you haven't been tested in a while, or have never been tested and have been sexually active, that you'll consider it. A positive status is better than a question mark, and knowing is always better where your health is concerned.

Positively Yours,

Shawn

Here is some information courtesy of STDCheck.com: "Testing saves lives. Even though HIV

diagnoses have decreased throughout the years, tens of thousands will still be infected with the disease this year," said Dr. David Jayne, the Medical Director of STDcheck.com. The site is offering free tests to readers of this blog from now through July. Call 1-800-456-2323. Tell the customer representative you found out about this via Shawn & Gwenn. They'll give you all the info you need in order to receive a free HIV test!

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http://beta.docker.poz.com/blog/importance-hivstd-testing