



# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Department of Health

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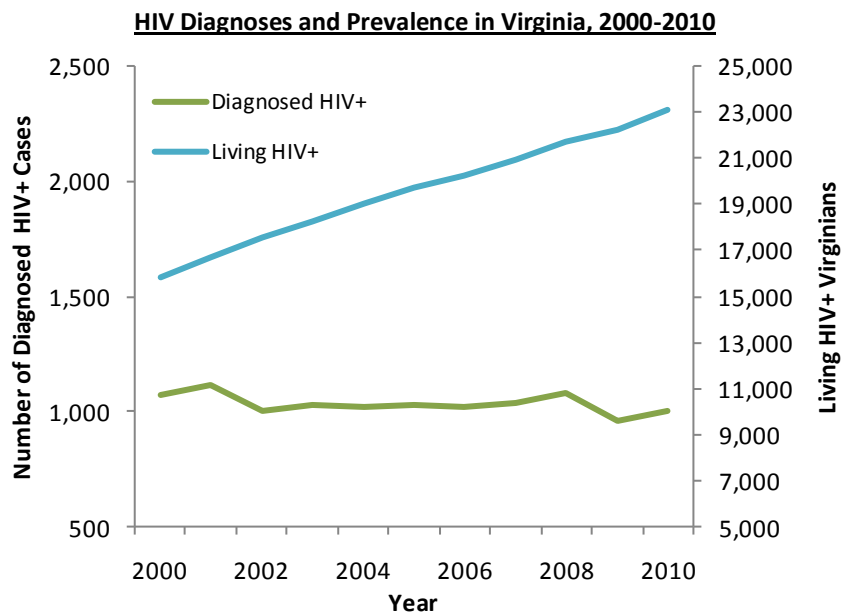
July 12, 2011

Dear Colleague:

This year marks three decades since the first cases of AIDS were identified. Many of us were in practice in the early years when AIDS was essentially a fatal disease. Since then, increased outreach and education, early diagnoses, and improvements in treatment have given us much to celebrate.

I want to thank you for the significant role you play in helping people with HIV/AIDS to live healthy, quality lives. Increased HIV testing is identifying people earlier in their infection, which means they are receiving effective medical care and medications more quickly. Your compassionate care and attention plays no small role in these achievements.

While we celebrate the great strides made in the areas of HIV testing and treatment, we continue to see new cases of infection in Virginia. One in 346 Virginians are known to be living with HIV or AIDS. Additionally, an estimated one in 1,304 Virginians are infected with HIV and do not know it. You are likely to treat a patient who falls into one of these categories, allowing you the opportunity to identify patients with HIV and assist them into treatment.



Since AIDS was first identified 30 years ago, testing recommendations have changed considerably. As recently as 2006, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued recommendations that HIV testing be treated as a routine medical test and offered at least once for everyone between the ages of 13-64. In July 2008, Virginia changed its law\* to mirror CDC recommendations and make HIV a routine test, just like having cholesterol or blood pressure checked. For pregnant women, the law requires that HIV testing be offered. In addition, we recommend repeat screening in the third trimester in accordance with CDC recommendations.

Your help is essential in continuing the fight against HIV/AIDS and reducing the number of new cases each year in Virginia. By engaging your patients in conversations about the importance of being tested for HIV, making HIV testing a routine part of medical care, and assisting those with HIV to get the treatment and resources they need, you can help reduce the spread of HIV and help people live longer, healthier lives.

Thank you for all you do to improve and protect the health of Virginians. Your dedication saves lives. If you have additional questions, please contact Kathryn Hafford, Director of the Division of Disease Prevention, at (804) 864-7955. Furthermore, counselors at the VDH Disease Prevention Hotline also are available Monday-Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. to connect patients with resources. The Hotline can be reached by telephone at (800) 533-4148 or by e-mail at [hiv-stdhotline@vdh.virginia.gov](mailto:hiv-stdhotline@vdh.virginia.gov).

Sincerely,

Karen Remley, MD, MBA, FAAP

*\* In July 2008, Virginia law (§32.1-37.2) was changed to mirror the CDC recommendations, making HIV testing as routine as cholesterol or blood pressure screening for the average primary care provider. Prior to the amended language, a provider was obligated to provide an explanation of the test, and had to obtain the patient's active consent before the test is performed. Now, while a test cannot be performed without the patient's knowledge, you do not need to have their active consent to do so. If the patient declines the test, it must be noted in the medical record.*