

ACOG and CDC release revised recommendations for HIV testing

HIV screening now recommended for all patients regardless of risk

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In December 2006, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) released revised recommendations for women's health screenings and care.

Included was the recommendation that routine HIV testing be offered to women ages 19 to 64 regardless of personal risk factors. Additionally, ACOG now recommends HIV testing for adolescents who are or ever have been sexually active. Previously ACOG recommended HIV testing only for women considered high risk or for those in areas with high HIV prevalence.

ACOG's new recommendation follows the U. S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC)'s "Revised Recommendations for HIV Testing of Adults, Adolescents and Pregnant Women in Health Care Settings," published in the September 21, 2006, issue of *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*.

The CDC's revised recommendations include:

- HIV screening for all patients aged 13 to 64 regardless of risk.
- A strong emphasis that HIV testing must be voluntary and undertaken with the patient's knowledge.
- Simplified testing procedures that no longer require written consent for HIV testing.
- Enhanced screening for pregnant women that includes repeat HIV testing in the third trimester for women who are at high risk for HIV and women in areas with high HIV prevalence among women of childbearing age or in facilities with at least one HIV diagnosis per 1,000 women screened. The CDC also recommends a rapid HIV test be used during labor for all women whose HIV status is unknown.

References

U.S. Centers for Disease Control. (2006, Sept. 21). CDC recommends routine, voluntary HIV screening in health care settings. Retrieved Dec. 8, 2006 from <http://www.cdc.gov/od/oc/media/pressrel/r060921.htm>

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. (2006, Dec. 1). ACOG releases revised recommendations for women's health screenings and care. Retrieved Dec. 8, 2006 from <http://www.acog.org>

According to the CDC, "the recommendations aim to simplify the HIV testing process in health care settings and increase early HIV diagnosis among the estimated more than 250,000 HIV-positive Americans who are unaware of their infection."

The new recommendations, easier to follow in busy office settings, will make HIV screening a routine part of normal health care. Early diagnosis of HIV can provide maximum benefit from treatment, as well as provide the opportunity for HIV positive individuals to take earlier steps to protect their partners.

According to the CDC, nearly 40 percent of individuals diagnosed with HIV are diagnosed within one year of the infection progressing to AIDS, when full benefit from treatment is unlikely. Additionally, people who are unaware of their infection are estimated to account for 50 to 70 percent of new sexually transmitted HIV infections.

"HIV screening for all patients aged 13 to 64 is now recognized as an important part of routine health care," said Dr. Carol Eisenhut, DCL Medical Director. "DCL Medical Laboratories is proud to provide laboratory services that will support physicians in following these recommendations. Increased patient care will result from the vigilance of more prevalent HIV screening."

DCL Medical Laboratories researches, markets and performs testing for medical diagnostic applications with a primary focus on women's health. DCL strives to be the preferred laboratory partner with a personal approach to providing innovative and consultative solutions that empower clients to help improve patients' lives.