



Michael R. Pence
Governor

Jerome M. Adams, MD, MPH
State Health Commissioner

CONTACT: Ken Severson

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 1, 2016

(317)233-7104

kseverson@isdh.in.gov

HEALTH OFFICIALS URGE WIDER USE OF PREVENTIVE MEDICATION AS NUMBER OF HIV OUTBREAK CASES RISES BY 4

INDIANAPOLIS—State health officials today announced that four additional cases of HIV have been confirmed in connection with the Scott County outbreak since Dec. 4 and urged people who engage in high-risk behaviors to talk with their physicians about preventive medications that can lower their risk of infection.

The four diagnoses bring the total number of people who have tested positive in the HIV outbreak to 188.

The outbreak has been linked to shared needles among injection drug users. All of those newly diagnosed were identified as contacts of cases previously identified in the outbreak. “We have made tremendous progress in slowing the spread of HIV infection in Scott County, but we know more people are likely to be diagnosed as testing continues,” said Indiana State Health Commissioner Jerome Adams, M.D., M.P.H. “Stopping risky behaviors is the best defense against HIV, but pre-exposure prophylaxis can also help protect those still battling addiction. We strongly urge physicians to talk frankly with patients about their risks and whether medication is appropriate to help prevent infection with HIV.”

Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) consists of a combination of two HIV medicines that are taken daily by mouth. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says daily PrEP use can reduce the risk of contracting HIV through sexual contact by more than 90 percent and through injection drug use by more than 70 percent.

PrEP is recommended for people who have injected drugs in the past six months and have shared needles or works and for those who have been in drug treatment in the past six months. Federal guidelines also recommend it be considered for people who are HIV

negative but are in an ongoing sexual relationship with an HIV-positive partner or others who are at high risk of contracting HIV through sexual contact. Those who take PrEP must have an HIV test before beginning the medication to ensure they aren't already infected and be retested every three months while taking the medication.

"Anyone who engages in risky behavior needs to know how to prevent HIV, and PrEP can be a valuable tool for many people," Dr. Adams said.

To learn more about PrEP, go to <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/risk/prep/index.html>. For more information about ways to reduce your risk of HIV, visit the CDC's HIV Reduction Tool at <https://wwwn.cdc.gov/hivrisk/>.

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