

# The UConn Buzz



## HIV/AIDS AWARENESS

December 1<sup>st</sup> is [World AIDS Day](#). Beginning in 1988, World AIDS Day was the first global health awareness day. It is an opportunity for people and organizations all over the world to come together in the fight against the HIV epidemic.

Although human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) has only been around for a relatively short period of time, it has caused a lot of harm in communities worldwide. The first case of AIDS (Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome) was identified in 1981, and the virus was officially named in 1984. Since then, it is estimated that 32 million people have died from AIDS-related illnesses worldwide. We have made some progress in preventing and treating HIV infection, but the [current statistics](#) are still cause for concern. In 2018 alone, there were 1.7 million new HIV infections and 770,000 deaths from AIDS-related illness. Some areas of the globe are more heavily burdened by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, including Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe. But even in developed countries, such as the U.S., the virus continues to be a public health concern. [In the United States](#), over 38,000 individuals received an HIV diagnosis in 2017 and in 2016, nearly 16,000 people with diagnosed HIV died.

[HIV](#) is a virus that attacks the body's immune system, specifically a type of immune cell known as CD4 cells. If too many of these cells are destroyed, then it becomes harder and harder for the body to fight off infections. There are different stages of HIV that are determined by the amount of the virus that is found in the bloodstream (the viral

load). The final stage of HIV is known as Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome, or AIDS. In this stage, the immune system is badly damaged and opportunistic infections are likely to set in. Our bodies are not equipped to fight off the virus, so once a person gets HIV they will have it for life. There is no cure, however, there is a treatment known as [antiretroviral therapy](#) (ART). If ART is taken properly, the viral load in the bloodstream will remain low enough to prevent progression of the illness and transmission to others.

One of the most important aspects of HIV prevention is educating the community about ways to protect themselves and others from exposure to the virus. [HIV is transmitted](#) when certain bodily fluids of an HIV-positive person come in contact with a mucous membrane, damaged skin, or are injected directly into the bloodstream. In the U.S., the virus is most commonly transmitted through unprotected sexual activity and sharing needles or syringes with a person who has HIV. HIV *cannot* be transmitted through air or water; sweat, tears, saliva or kissing; insects or animals; sharing food, drinks, or toilets. If a person is HIV-positive, there are ways to protect their sexual partner. As previously mentioned, proper adherence to ART can lower the chance of HIV transmission to

almost zero. Partners of people who have HIV may also consider taking [pre-exposure prophylactic](#) (PrEP), a medication that can prevent HIV from taking hold and spreading throughout the body.

In the fight against HIV/AIDS, [stigma](#) and discrimination are still issues. Stigma refers to negative beliefs and attitudes toward people living with HIV, while discrimination refers to the actions that result from these beliefs. Examples can include refusing contact with or socially isolating people who are HIV positive. Stigma can be internalized, causing the individual to develop a negative self-image and feelings of shame, isolation, and despair. This can cause individuals to avoid getting tested or treated for HIV, in fear that their HIV status will be disclosed and they will be viewed negatively by their community. A lot of these negative beliefs about those with HIV stem from fear of getting the virus. There are many misconceptions about how it can be transmitted. Many people are not aware that people with HIV nowadays can lead healthy, fulfilling lives. With early detection and proper treatment, a person with HIV can live just as long as a person without the virus. One of the goals of World AIDS Day is to increase awareness and debunk misconceptions in an effort to decrease HIV-related stigma and improve the quality of life of HIV positive individuals.



## HAPPENINGS AROUND TOWN

**7th Annual Winter Welcome.** Saturday, December 7, 2019.

The Mansfield Downtown Partnership invites residents and visitors to head to Downtown Storrs for an afternoon of seasonal fun! Enjoy a variety of fun activities, check some names off your shopping list. Winter Welcome is free and open to everyone. This event will take place rain, snow, or shine.

**Holiday Parade and Tree Lighting in Bolton.** December 7, 2019 the parade begins at 6:30PM at Bolton Center School and ends at Bentley Memorial Library, The lighting of the Tree will follow on Bolton town Green in the Gazebo with Santa . Hot Cocoa and Popcorn for everyone who joins. This is a free Event to the community.

**Run for A Claus.** Sunday, December 15, 2019. this a 2.5 mile race Entry includes a complete Santa suit along with a merry post-race party at Hot Rod Café. Get your Santa on in style! Decorate, embellish, bedazzle or jolly-up your Santa suit – awards will be provided for the most festive adult and child costume.

**Freedom From Smoking.** Quitting smoking is the best thing you can do to improve your health.. This is a free, evidence-based, eight session program. Starting on January 7, 2020 at 6pm at Windham Hospital

**Resolution Run 5k.** Sunday, January 12, 2020 in South Windsor. Start the new year running strong at the Resolution Run.

**Tolland County Chamber of Commerce's Health and Wellness Fair .** Free and open to the public. January 14, 2020 12-3pm, Rain date January 21, 2020 at 8 Keynote Dr. Vernon, CT



### Blushing Pomegranate Chicken

**INGREDIENTS** ♦ 2 pounds sweet potatoes, peeled and quartered ♦ 3 1/2 pounds bone-in chicken pieces ♦ 1 cup pomegranate juice ♦ 1/4 cup sherry vinegar ♦ 2 Tablespoons olive oil ♦ 1 tablespoon brown sugar ♦ 1 teaspoon ground ginger ♦ 4 cloves garlic, crushed ♦ 1 teaspoon salt ♦ 1/4 teaspoon black pepper ♦ 1 bunch green onions, sliced ♦ 1/4 cup pomegranate seeds

**DIRECTIONS** **1.** Arrange sweet potatoes and chicken pieces in a 9x13 inch baking dish. In a small bowl, mix together pomegranate juice, sherry vinegar, olive oil, brown sugar, ginger, garlic, and salt and pepper. Pour over chicken and sweet potatoes. Cover, and marinate for 1 to 2 hours, turning once. **2.** Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Bake, uncovered, in preheated oven for 45 minutes, or until chicken and sweet potatoes are cooked through. Baste with cooking juices several times while cooking. **3.** Sprinkle with green onion and pomegranate seeds before serving.

## The Importance of Handwashing

The first week of December is **National Handwashing Awareness Week!** It is important to practice good handwashing techniques to prevent the spread of germs and illness, especially now that flu season is upon us. Handwashing can prevent about 30% of diarrhea-related illnesses and about 20% of respiratory infections, like colds. **Studies** have shown that simply educating communities about handwashing can reduce the number of people who get sick with diarrhea by 23-40% and reduce the amount of respiratory illness in the population by 16-21%. Preventing the incidence of infections can also reduce the need for antibiotics. Antibiotics are often overused and inappropriately prescribed, which can contribute to the development of antibiotic resistance.

Handwashing is an easy, effective way to prevent exposure to harmful germs in the first place!

You should remember these five steps for **proper handwashing**:

**Wet** your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.

**Lather** your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.

**Scrub** your hands for at least 20 seconds. If you need a timer, you can hum the "Happy Birthday" song from beginning to end **twice!**

**Rinse** your hands well under clean, running water.

**Dry** your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

For more information about how to keep you and your family healthy click **HERE!**



Be Well is an employee wellness program provided through the Eastern Highlands Health District with funding from The CT Department of Health. The goal of the program is to make the healthy choice the easy choice.

