Routine HIV Testing Recommended

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that more than 1,000,000 people in the U.S. are now living with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. The CDC also estimates that 25% of these people don't know they have it!

People who are not aware of their HIV infection are not able to take advantage of therapies that can help keep them healthy longer. Since HIV is transmitted through blood and body fluids, usually through unprotected sex or sharing of needles, they can unknowingly infect their partners.

The only way to know your HIV status is to be tested. Revised CDC recommendations now call for HIV testing to be included as part of routine healthcare for people of all ages. Many places, including your regular healthcare provider, offer HIV tests. Free or low-cost, confidential tests are available locally through Planned Parenthood and Olmsted County Public Health Services.

You Give...You Get

'Tis the season for giving and getting, but not only in the ways you may be thinking. Sure there is the giving and getting of gifts with friends and family. And there is the giving of food, clothing, or money to worthy organizations and the good feeling you get in return. But one kind of giving costs you nothing but your time, you can do it any time of year, and it gives you health benefits in return. Volunteering! Yes, volunteering is good for your health!

People who volunteer have a heightened sense of well-being. In addition, they have better weight control, relief from insomnia, a stronger immune system, and shorter recovery time from surgery.

Volunteers learn interpersonal skills (like being able to better understand and motivate others), improve their communication skills (writing and public speaking), and increase their knowledge on issues such as healthcare, politics, and the environment.

Volunteering boosts self-esteem, promotes a sense of calmness, and decreases loneliness and depression. When you volunteer you are around people, often people who have similar interests, so it's a great way to meet new people and develop new friendships.

So go ahead! Spend time chatting with a nursing home resident. Play a game of cards with someone who's disabled. Help school age kids with their reading. Pick up trash from a local park. Before you know it, you'll be enjoying the health benefits of volunteering!

For more information on volunteering, including local volunteer opportunities, check out www.volunteersolutions.org/olmsted

All Stressed Out and Nowhere to Go?

Not for long! A relaxation and biofeedback area is opening soon in the UCR Counseling Center. Developed by RCTC Counseling and Health Service, the area will be free and open to all UCR students and staff. Audio resources will guide you through visualization or meditation exercises and biofeedback software will let you see for yourself how the body's reaction to stress really can be controlled. The center is not open yet, but we are looking for volunteers to give it a try. Interested? Contact the Counseling Center.

"It is our choices, Harry, that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities."

~ Professor Dumbledore from Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets by J.K. Rowling