

About HIV/AIDS

- Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is a virus that weakens the body's immune system. The virus moves into the body's "T cells," which fight off infections and rearranges the DNA inside them. The infected cell is no longer able to combat diseases and instead creates more HIV-1 infected cells.
- Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is the most extreme form of HIV infection. HIV becomes AIDS when the body has an extremely low amount of T cells left, greatly weakening the body's immune system. It can take anywhere from two to 15 years for untreated HIV to develop into AIDS.
- HIV/AIDS is a term to describe the two together. The term also serves as a reminder that HIV always comes first. It is possible to have HIV without developing AIDS, but it's impossible to contract AIDS without first having HIV.
- At the end of 2016, an estimated 1.1 million people aged 13 and older had HIV infection in the United States, including an estimated 162,500 (14%) people whose infections had not been diagnosed.
- Approximately 40,000 new HIV infections occur each year in the United States, about 70 percent among men and 30 percent among women. Of these newly infected people, half are younger than 25 years of age.
- HIV infection disproportionately affects African American and Hispanic women. Together they represent less than 25 percent of all U.S. women, yet they account for more than 77 percent of AIDS cases in women. HIV/AIDS is now the third leading cause of death among women ages 25 to 44 and the leading cause of death among African American women in this age group.
- The epidemic is growing most rapidly among minority populations and is a leading killer of African American males. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), AIDS affects nearly seven times more African Americans than whites and three times more Hispanics than whites.
- Around 40 million people worldwide are living with HIV/AIDS. That's more than the entire population of Canada (37.2 million). Last year, almost a million people died from AIDS-related causes. That's 2,500 people every day, nearly two every minute.
- An estimated 25 percent of HIV-positive people are not diagnosed. That means a quarter of HIV-positive people are not receiving treatment and are at risk of transmitting the disease to more people.
- The life expectancy of people with HIV depends on whether they are able to access and afford treatment.
- While there is no cure for HIV/AIDS, it is possible to treat. Antiretroviral (ARV) drugs can help control the virus and even prevent transmission to other people. Antiretroviral therapy (ART), the combination of three or more ARV drugs, should start as soon as possible after diagnosis to slow the progression of HIV.
- HIV didn't begin in humans. The virus was originally an SIV (Simian Immunodeficiency Virus) that infects chimpanzees. It is generally believed that the virus crossed over into humans through hunting. While this crossover happened around 1920, the virus wasn't verified in humans until 1959 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.
- The virus is spread through the exchange of certain kinds of bodily fluids, including blood, breast milk, semen, and vaginal fluids.
- All of the top 10 countries with the highest HIV prevalence are in Africa. Eswatini, formerly Swaziland, has the highest prevalence, with more than 27 percent of the adult population living with HIV/AIDS. The virus takes a much larger toll on the female population, with more than 35 percent reporting an HIV-positive status.