



## 1<sup>st</sup> December is World AIDS Day

Government and health officials, non-governmental organizations and individuals around the world observe the day, often with education on AIDS prevention and control.

World AIDS Day was first conceived in August 1987 by James W. Bunn and Thomas Netter, two public information officers for the Global Programme on AIDS at the World Health Organization in Geneva, Switzerland. World AIDS Day is one of eight official global public health campaigns marked by the World Health Organization (WHO), along with World Health Day, World Blood Donor Day, World Immunization Week, World Tuberculosis Day, World No Tobacco Day, World Malaria Day and World Hepatitis Day.

### HIV/AIDS:

AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome) is a chronic, potentially life-threatening condition caused by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). By damaging your immune system, HIV interferes with your body's ability to fight the organisms that cause disease.

The terms "HIV" and "AIDS" can be confusing because both terms refer to the same disease. However, "HIV" refers to the virus itself, and "AIDS" refers to the late stage of HIV infection, when an HIV-infected person's immune system is severely damaged and has difficulty fighting diseases and certain cancers.

### HIV the Global problem:

HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, has become one of the world's most serious health and development challenges: 33.4 million are currently living with HIV/AIDS.

More than 25 million people have died of AIDS worldwide since the first cases were reported in 1981.

While cases have been reported in all regions of the world, almost all those living with HIV (97%) reside in low- and middle-income countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), most people living with HIV or at risk for HIV do not have access to prevention, care, and treatment, and there is still no cure.

### Causes:

Certain body fluids from an HIV-infected person can transmit HIV.

These body fluids are:

-  Blood.
-  Semen (cum).
-  Pre-seminal fluid (pre-cum).
-  Rectal fluids.
-  Vaginal fluids.
-  Breast milk.

## The virus is spread (transmitted) person-to-person in any of the following ways:

- ✚ Through sexual contact -- including oral, vaginal, and anal sex.
- ✚ Through blood -- via blood transfusions or needle sharing.
- ✚ From mother to child -- a pregnant woman can spread the virus to her fetus through their shared blood circulation, or a nursing mother can transmit it to her baby through her breast milk.
- ✚ Tattoos or body piercings - present a potential risk of HIV transmission.

## The virus is not spread by:

- ✚ Air or water.
- ✚ Insects, including mosquitoes or ticks.
- ✚ Saliva, tears, or sweat.
- ✚ Casual contact, like shaking hands, hugging or sharing dishes/drinking glasses.
- ✚ Drinking fountains.
- ✚ Toilet seats.
- ✚ Participating in sports.
- ✚ Touching items that were touched by a person infected with the virus.

## Symptoms:

Symptoms related to acute HIV infection (when a person is first infected) are often flu-like:

- ✚ Diarrhea.
- ✚ Fever.
- ✚ Headache.
- ✚ Mouth sores, including yeast infection (thrush).
- ✚ Muscle stiffness or aching.
- ✚ Night sweats.
- ✚ Rashes of different types.
- ✚ Sore throat.
- ✚ Swollen lymph glands.

## WHAT IF I DON'T THINK I AM AT RISK? SHOULD I STILL GET TESTED?

Some people who test positive for HIV did not perceive themselves to be at risk. That's why CDC recommends that providers in all health care settings make HIV testing a routine part of medical care for all patients, unless the patient declines (opts out).

## What If I Have HIV/AIDS and I Am Pregnant?

If you have HIV and are pregnant, consult a health care provider who knows about HIV disease. Without treatment, about 25 out of 100 babies born to women with HIV are also infected. However, the use of HIV medicines, cesarean delivery, and refraining from breastfeeding can reduce the risk of transmission to less than 2 out of 100.

## Coping and support:

- ✚ Fortunately, numerous services and resources are available to people with HIV.
- ✚ Most HIV/AIDS clinics have social workers, counselors or nurses who can help you with problems directly or put you in touch with people who can.
- ✚ Coming to terms with your illness may be the hardest thing you've ever done. For some people, having a strong faith or a sense of something greater than themselves makes this process easier.

## Prevention:

There's no vaccine to prevent HIV infection and no cure for AIDS. But it's possible to protect yourself and others from infection. That means educating yourself about HIV and avoiding any behavior that allows HIV-infected fluids — blood, semen, vaginal secretions and breast milk — into your body.

## To help prevent the spread of HIV:

- ✚ Use a new condom every time you have sex.
- ✚ Tell your sexual partners if you have HIV.
- ✚ Use a clean needle. If you use a needle to inject drugs, make sure it's sterile and don't share it.

- 🦋 If you're pregnant, get medical care right away. If you're HIV-positive, you may pass the infection to your baby. But if you receive treatment during pregnancy, you can cut your baby's risk by as much as two-thirds.
- 🦋 Consider male circumcision. There's evidence that male circumcision can help reduce a man's risk of acquiring HIV.
- 🦋 If you test positive for HIV, you can pass the virus to others. You should not donate blood plasma, body organs, or sperm.
- 🦋 Breastfeeding should be avoided to prevent passing on HIV to infants through breast milk.

### Reference Links:

- 🦋 <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmedhealth/PMH0001620/>
- 🦋 <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/hiv-aids/basics/prevention/con-20013732>
- 🦋 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World\\_AIDS\\_Day](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_AIDS_Day)

**For any enquiry or assistance please contact:** [wellness@medicaretpa.co.in](mailto:wellness@medicaretpa.co.in)

**Disclaimer:** No information contained here should be relied on in making health decisions. Always check with your doctor or other health care provider.