



Press Release

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Only one quarter of Americans with HIV have virus under control *CDC launches campaign to increase HIV testing so more can access needed care*

Nearly 3 out of 4 Americans living with HIV do not have their infection under control, according to a [Vital Signs](#) report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, released today in advance of World AIDS Day, December 1. The authors say the low percentage is because 1 in 5 people with HIV do not realize they are infected and, of those who are aware, only 51 percent receive ongoing medical care and treatment.

Of the nearly 1.2 million people living with HIV in the United States, only an estimated 28 percent have a suppressed viral load (defined as viral load less than 200 copies of the blood-borne virus per milliliter of blood) – meaning that the virus is under control and at a level that helps keep them healthy and reduces the risk of transmitting the virus to others.

However, of those living with HIV who are in ongoing care and on antiretroviral treatment, 77 percent have suppressed levels of the virus. Effective HIV treatment and care benefit infected individuals by improving their health, and are also important for HIV prevention. Results from a recent study of heterosexual couples from the National Institutes of Health showed that consistently taking antiretroviral therapy, in combination with safer behaviors, can reduce the risk of spreading HIV by approximately 96 percent.

“While we have known that viral suppression can be achieved with proper HIV treatment and care, today’s new Vital Signs data highlight the challenges our country faces in keeping HIV-positive Americans in the care they need to control the virus,” said CDC Director Thomas R. Frieden, M.D., M.P.H. “By improving testing, linkage to care and treatment services, we can help people living with HIV feel better and live longer, and can reduce the spread of HIV dramatically. This is not just an individual responsibility, but a responsibility for families, partners, communities and health care providers.”

Men who have sex with men (MSM), the population most severely affected by HIV in the United States, are least likely to know they are infected and less likely to receive prevention counseling (39 percent, compared with 50 percent of men who have sex with women and women who have sex with men).

Study authors underscore that improvements are needed at each stage in the overall process of treatment and care. That means increasing the number of infected Americans who are tested, linked to care, remain in care, receive prevention counseling and are successfully treated – all to achieve viral suppression.

“Closing the gaps in testing, access to care and treatment will all be essential to slowing the U.S. HIV epidemic,” said Jonathan Mermin, M.D., director of CDC’s Division of HIV/AIDS Prevention. “HIV testing is the most important first step toward breaking the cycle of transmission. Combined with effective prevention services, linkage to care and ongoing effective treatment, testing provides a gateway to the most effective prevention tools at our disposal.”



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New campaign encourages black gay and bisexual men to get tested for HIV

To increase HIV testing rates among one of the populations most affected by HIV, black gay and bisexual men, CDC also launched a new national awareness campaign, Testing Makes Us Stronger. CDC collaborated with gay and bisexual community leaders, physicians and other experts to develop the campaign, which strives to raise awareness, improve access and increase the number of black gay and bisexual men who are aware of their HIV status: the first step to care, treatment and prevention services.

Testing Makes Us Stronger encourages men to “stay strong and informed.” The ads depict a diverse range of black gay men, including individuals and couples. The campaign includes national print and online advertising; a dedicated website and Facebook page; promotion at black gay pride events; and outdoor and transit advertising in gay and African-American neighborhoods in six cities where black gay and bisexual men are heavily affected by HIV – Atlanta, Baltimore, Houston, New York City, Oakland, Calif., and Washington, D.C.

“Black gay and bisexual men across the country are already doing many of the right things to protect themselves – but more need to make HIV testing a regular part of their lives,” said Kevin Fenton, M.D., director of CDC’s National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD and Tuberculosis Prevention. “Testing Makes Us Stronger was designed by black gay men for black gay men and strives to communicate the power of knowing your HIV status as a first step toward staying healthy.”

Research shows that black gay and bisexual men do not engage in riskier behaviors than other gay men, but are at higher risk for HIV due to the high prevalence of HIV that already exists in many black and gay communities, increasing the likelihood of becoming infected with each sexual encounter.

In addition to increasing testing and ensuring that people with HIV remain in care, CDC scientists stress that proven approaches to risk reduction – such as consistent condom use and reducing the number of sexual partners – among uninfected individuals will also remain critical. In part, because of the substantial amount of HIV transmission that occurs during the early stages of HIV infection, well before diagnosis and treatment can occur.

Testing Makes Us Stronger is the latest campaign of Act Against AIDS, CDC’s umbrella campaign to fight complacency about HIV nationwide. Other Act Against AIDS campaigns include those which focus on African-American women, African-American youth, health care providers and the general public.

More information about the new statistics on viral suppression and Testing Makes Us Stronger is available at www.cdc.gov/nchhstp/newsroom.

[CDC works 24/7](#) saving lives, protecting people from health threats and saving money to have a more secure nation. Whether these threats are chronic or acute, manmade or natural, human error or deliberate attack, global or domestic, CDC is the U.S. health protection agency.

[Vital Signs](#) is a CDC report that appears on the first Tuesday of the month as part of the CDC journal [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, or MMWR](#). The report provides the latest data and information on key health indicators, such as cancer prevention, obesity, tobacco use, motor vehicle passenger safety, prescription drug overdose, HIV/AIDS, alcohol use, health care–associated infections, cardiovascular health, teen pregnancy, asthma and food safety.

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