

WORLD AIDS DAY

December 1



ABOUT HIV AND AIDS

HIV and AIDS are sensitive topics to discuss because so many of our values relating to life, death, sexuality, responsibility, and drug use may be revealed in the discussion. The following information can help you learn more about HIV and AIDS.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

What is HIV?

HIV stands for **Human Immunodeficiency Virus**. It is the virus that causes AIDS. HIV cannot be transmitted through casual contact. HIV can only be transmitted through bodily fluids such as blood, semen, and vaginal secretions from a person infected with the virus.

What is AIDS?

AIDS stands for **Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome**. Infections from HIV can lead to AIDS. AIDS is a condition that prevents the body's immune system from effectively fighting disease. There is no cure for AIDS.

Who is at risk?

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reports that in 2005, 50 percent of new HIV cases were from the African American community, and 20 percent were from the U.S. Hispanic/Latino community. Almost half of the people becoming infected with HIV infections each year are those under the age of 25. Young African Americans represent 64 percent of the AIDS cases among 13-19 year olds, and Latinos represent 20 percent of this age group. Teenage girls account for 54 percent of new AIDS cases among teenagers.

What are some barriers to HIV and AIDS diagnosis and care?

Stigma and discrimination play a key role as barriers to HIV and AIDS diagnosis. Images associated with HIV and AIDS suggest that HIV is an "African disease," a "gay plague," or a "junkie's disease." These stereotypes reinforce social inequalities and misconceptions and stigmatize the disease.

How does one become infected with the HIV virus?

You cannot tell if a person is HIV-positive by looking at him or her. The only way for someone to know if he or she is infected with HIV is to take an HIV antibody test.

You can get infected with HIV by

- Having sex with an infected person
- Sharing a needle (shooting drugs, body tattooing, or body piercing) with someone who is infected
- Drinking the breast milk of an infected woman
- Getting a blood transfusion contaminated with HIV-infected blood
- Coming into contact with hypodermic needles contaminated with HIV-infected blood
- Receiving HIV as an infant from an infected mother during pregnancy or childbirth

How do you test for the HIV virus?

There are several HIV antibody tests being used: the standard blood test (results take up to two weeks); the oral mucosal transudate test (a specially treated pad is placed in a person's mouth and rubbed between the lower cheek and gum); the urine HIV antibody test; and the rapid HIV antibody test (a finger-stick sample of blood is collected; results are known within twenty minutes).

For more information about testing options in your area, contact your local health department or visit www.hivtest.org.

What is "Christian sexuality?"

Sexual intercourse is an expression of maturity achieved within the committed relationship of marriage. Casual and permissive sex will not prepare you for faithfulness in marriage nor help you to appreciate the sanctity and dignity of the human person.

To learn more about the Catholic approach to HIV and AIDS education, visit these websites:

UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF
CATHOLIC BISHOPS
www.usccb.org/saac
and
www.usccb.org/hispanicaffairs

NATIONAL CATHOLIC AIDS NETWORK
www.ncan.org

NATIONAL BLACK CATHOLIC CONGRESS
www.nbccongress.org

HIV/AIDS . . .

IN THE CARIBBEAN

- The Caribbean's status as the second most affected region in the world masks substantial differences in the extent and intensity of its epidemics. Estimated national adult HIV prevalence exceeds 1 percent in Barbados, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, and Suriname; 2 percent in the Bahamas, Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago; and 3 percent in Haiti. In Cuba, on the other hand, prevalence has yet to reach 0.2 percent.
- The AIDS epidemic claimed an estimated 24,000 lives in the Caribbean in 2005, making it the leading cause of death among adults aged 15-44 years.
- An estimated total of 300,000 people are living with HIV in the Caribbean, including the 30,000 people who became infected in 2005. In the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) region, an estimated 240,000 people are living with HIV,

including the 25,000 people who acquired the virus in 2005.

— Information taken from www.unaids.org/en

IN AFRICA

- Sub-Saharan Africa has just over 10 percent of the world's population but is home to more than 60 percent of all people living with HIV—25.8 million people.
- In 2005, an estimated 3.2 million people in the region became newly infected, while 2.4 million adults and children died of AIDS.
- Among young people aged 15-24 years, an estimated 4.6 percent of women and 1.7 percent of men were living with HIV in 2005.

— Information taken from www.unaids.org/en

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

SPEAK OUT

- Wear a red ribbon—a symbol of AIDS awareness.
- Talk, talk, talk— Tell a family member or friend. Talk about HIV prevention at the laundromat, at the beauty salon or barbershop, and at the parish social.
- Pray for the healing of AIDS.
- Speak up for AIDS and more drug programs for your community. Federal monies are available. One voice does make a difference.

TAKE ACTION

- Know your status. Consider an HIV test if you
 - Work in a hospital or institution where you come into contact with another's blood
 - Share needles or syringes
 - Are pregnant or considering becoming pregnant
 - Practice irresponsible sexual behaviors
- Offer to help or comfort someone with HIV/AIDS. Prepare meals, “pass the plate” for a monetary donation, and give your “pass the plate” donation to an agency in your neighborhood helping those infected with HIV/AIDS.

- Reach out and touch AIDS babies in a local hospital.
- Come together as a family; let's celebrate UMOJA,* unity, in eliminating this disease among us!
- Read and share Scripture, i.e., Psalms 27 and 56.

*UMOJA is a Swahili word for “unity” and one of the principles of Kwanzaa (a week-long secular holiday honoring African American heritage).

PRAY

“Walk with me, Lord
Walk with me, while I am on this tedious journey.
I want Jesus to walk with me.”

—a Negro Spiritual

As HIV/AIDS in the Black community continues to increase, we sing this spiritual, asking the Lord to walk with us in prevention, testing, education, awareness, and healing.

In union with the whole Church we pray,
“In his name / heal the ills which afflict us / and restore to us the joy of life renewed.”

—Prayer over the Gifts from the Anointing of the Sick within Mass



Learn more! Get the facts!





PRAY WITH THE CHURCH

*for all who suffer from
HIV or AIDS*

God of our weary years,
God of our silent tears,
O Good and gracious God,
you are the God of health and wholeness.

In the plan of your creation,
you call us to struggle in our sickness
and to cling always to the cross of your Son.

Father, we are your servants.

Many of us are now suffering with HIV or AIDS.

We come before you, and ask you,
if it is your holy will,
to take away this suffering from us,
restore us to health and lead us to know you
and your powerful healing,
love of body and spirit.

We ask you also

to be with those of us who nurse your sick ones.

We are the mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers,
children, and friends of your suffering people.

It is so hard for us to see those whom we love suffer.

You know what it is to suffer.

Help us to minister in loving care, support, and
patience to your people who suffer with HIV and AIDS.

Lead us to do whatever it will take to
eradicate this illness from the lives of those
who are touched by it,
both directly and indirectly.

Trusting in you and the strength of your Spirit,
we pray these things in the name of Jesus.

Amen.

Kids Corner

for Children And Youth

HIV/AIDS QUIZ

1. HIV and AIDS are the same thing.

- a. True
- b. False

2. HIV is . . .

- a. A name of a game
- b. A part of a math problem
- c. A virus

3. You can look at a person and tell that he or she has HIV.

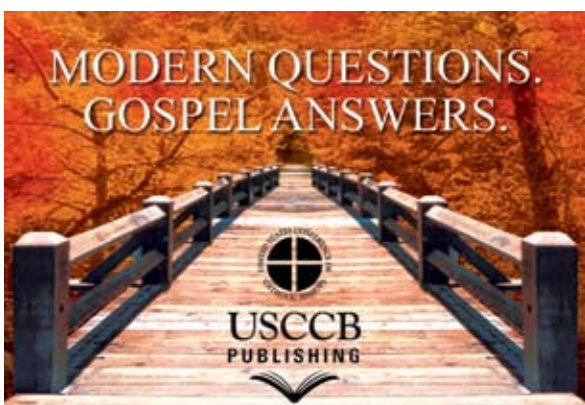
- a. True
- b. False

4. HIV is a _____ that causes AIDS.

5. Babies can be born with HIV.

- a. True
- b. False

ANSWERS
1. b 2. c 3. b 4. virus 5. a



World AIDS Day, December 1: About HIV AIDS was developed as a resource by the Secretariat for African American Catholics of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). It was reviewed by the Committee Chairman, Bishop Joseph N. Perry, and has been authorized for publication by the undersigned.

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