

DECEMBER 1: WORLD AIDS DAY

This year's theme is **End Inequalities. End AIDS.**

In a recent press release of UNAIDS, they sent a warning that we could face over seven (7) million AIDS - related deaths worldwide in the next 10 years. This could happen if the global leaders fail to address inequalities.

COVID - 19 greatly affects the AIDS response in many countries. In 2020, the pace of HIV testing declined and fewer people living with HIV sought treatment in 80% of countries reporting to UNAIDS.

The warning comes in UNAIDS' new report entitled *Unequal, unprepared, under threat: why bold action against inequalities is needed to end AIDS, stop COVID-19 and prepare for future pandemics.*

BY THE NUMBERS (2020)



37 700 000

Estimated number of people living with HIV



680 000

People died from HIV - related causes



1 500 000

People newly infected

WHAT IS HIV?

The **Human Immunodeficiency Virus** (HIV) attacks cells that help the body fight infections. This, then, makes a person more vulnerable to other infections and diseases.

Spread occurs thru contact with certain bodily fluids of a person with HIV -- ***most commonly during unprotected sexual intercourse or through sharing injection equipment.***

WHAT IS AIDS?

If HIV is left untreated, this could lead to AIDS. **Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome** (AIDS) is the late or **advanced stage of HIV infection**. This occurs when the body's immune system has been badly damaged due to the virus. AIDS is further defined by development of certain cancers, infections or other severe long-term clinical manifestations.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

The symptoms of HIV and AIDS vary -- depends on the phase or stage of infection.

Primary Infection (Acute HIV)

Some people infected **develop a flu-like illness within a few weeks after the virus enters the body**. Possible signs and symptoms include the following below - listed; however, these symptoms can be so mild that it might go unnoticed. Yet, the amount of virus in the bloodstream is quite high at this time -- the infection spreads more easily during primary infection than the next stages.

Fever | Headache | Muscle Aches and Joint Pain | Rashes | Sore Throat and Mouth Sores | Swollen Lymph Glands, mainly on the neck | Diarrhea | Weight loss | Cough | Night Sweats

Clinical Latent Infection (Chronic HIV)

HIV is still in the body and in the white blood cells. But, many **may not have any symptoms or infections during this stage**. This stage can last for years if a person is not receiving antiretroviral therapy (ART). Some, though, may develop a more severe disease much sooner.

Symptomatic HIV Infection

As the virus **continues to multiply and destroy the immune cells**, infected person may develop mild infections or chronic signs and symptoms such as:

Fever | Fatigue | Swollen Lymph Nodes | Diarrhea | Weight Loss | Oral Yeast Infection (thrush) | Shingles (herpes zoster) | Pneumonia

Progression to AIDS

Untreated HIV usually turns into AIDS in about 8 to 10 years. When AIDS occurs, the immune system has been severely damaged. This results to higher chances of developing opportunistic infections or cancers -- diseases that wouldn't usually cause illness in a person with a healthy immune system.

Sweats | Chills | Recurring Fever | Chronic Diarrhea | Swollen Lymph Glands | Persistent White Spots or unusual mouth or tongue lesions | Persistent, unexplained Fatigue | Weakness | Weight Loss | Skin Rashes

WAYS HIV IS NOT TRANSMITTED

HIV does not survive long outside the human body (such as on surfaces), and it cannot reproduce outside a human host. It is **not transmitted** by:



Mosquitoes, ticks or insects



Saliva, tears or sweat



Hugging, shaking hands, sharing toilets, sharing dishes, or closed -mouth kissing with someone who has HIV



Air

DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT

HIV infection can be detected, with great accuracy, using World Health Organization's (WHO) pre-qualified tests within a nationally approved testing strategy. Most widely-used diagnostic tests detect antibodies produced as part of immune response to fight HIV. Following a positive diagnosis, retesting shall be done before enrollment in a treatment and care to rule out any potential testing or reporting error.

HIV disease can be managed by treatment regimens. This is a combination of three (3) or more antiretroviral (ARV) drugs. Current antiretroviral therapy (ART) does not cure HIV infection; however, it highly suppresses replication within a person's body. This allows the immune system to recover, strengthen and regain capability to fight off infections and, even, cancer.

