

# WORLD AIDS DAY

## I DEC



## HIV/AIDS: HOW WE ARE WINNING AGAINST THIS DISEASE

We've come a long way since HIV/AIDS first showed up in South Africa in 1982. Unfortunately, due to a complex political history, we only really started addressing the problem in the mid-90s when South Africa already had the largest population of HIV-positive people in the world.

HIV is not yet under control. Infections are still on the rise in young people, and many who have the disease, don't take medication. Despite this, it's important for us to look at the progress we've made, and remind ourselves that although the battle is tough, there still is hope.

## WHAT WE HAVE ACCOMPLISHED SO FAR



- Mother-to-child transmissions (where HIV-positive moms infect their newborns) dropped from 8% in 2008 to 2% in 2012, and the number of children who are HIV positive has dropped by 20%. This is thanks to well-monitored antenatal programmes.
- 92% of people living with HIV now know their status and 70% of people with HIV are receiving treatment.
- 64% of people who are HIV positive, are virally suppressed – which means the treatment is helping them live normal, healthy lives.
- We are the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to approve PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis), which is medication taken to prevent getting HIV, particularly for people who are at risk of exposure, such as healthcare workers, people with multiple sex partners or drug abusers (by injection).
- South Africa has the largest antiretroviral treatment (ART) programme in the world, offering treatment to HIV-positive patients. Thanks to some success in these programmes, we have seen a decline in new infections for pregnant women, as well as young adults aged 15 to 24.

## WHAT WE STILL NEED TO DO

Nevertheless, HIV infection is still on the rise in our country, especially among adults over 25. In addition, many young people still don't have enough knowledge on how to prevent the spread of HIV, especially those who are uninformed or living in rural locations.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

### 1. Know your status

If you haven't been tested yet, do so today. We all need to know our HIV status and we need to get checked regularly.

### 2. Abstain

Try to avoid a sexual relationship, unless you are sure that you can have safe, protected sex with a single partner. There are also safer alternatives to getting intimate without having sexual intercourse.

### 3. Always practice and promote safe sex

Unless you are in a committed relationship where you only have sex with one person, and you are sure that person is faithful, you should **always** practice safe sex. With multiple partners, you are at higher risk of getting HIV. The use of condoms is the best option to protect you against HIV. Visit your GP or local clinic to find out more about prevention.

### 4. Support HIV-awareness organisations

There are several NGOs and organisations helping to spread the word and educate people on HIV/AIDS.

Here are a few organisations you can support by joining their campaigns, giving financial support, or volunteering:

**AIDS Consortium**

**AIDS Foundation South Africa (AFSA)**

**Desmond Tutu Health Foundation**

**Networking HIV & AIDS Community of Southern African NPC (NACOSA)**

**Treatment Action Campaign (TAC)**



Even though World Aids Day is commemorated on 1 December, you can get involved with spreading awareness anytime of the year. Visit **worldaidsday.org** to find out more.

### Resources:

History of HIV in South Africa. 5 May 2020. <https://www.verywellhealth.com/hiv-around-the-world-south-africa-48673>.

Modelling of HIV prevention and treatment progress in five South African metropolitan districts. 11 March 2021.

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-021-85154-0>.

HIV and AIDS in South Africa. 15 April 2020.

<https://www.avert.org/professionals/hiv-around-world/sub-saharan-africa/south-africa>.



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