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**H**IV and AIDS Awareness Month takes place in December to educate people about the conditions, remember those who have died and celebrate victories in achieving new medical treatments and overcoming stigmas related to the disease. According to AIDS.gov, 1 million Americans are living with the disease. Chances are, some of your employees may be battling the illness or are caring for someone who is. This Meeting in a Box is a valuable tool to help you and your workforce learn and have candid discussions about HIV and AIDS, and begin to dispel myths surrounding them. In this packet, we provide a basic primer on what HIV and AIDS are, a timeline of historic events and medical breakthroughs surrounding the illnesses, facts and figures on Americans living with the conditions and an info sheet that dispels stereotypes, myths and fears surrounding them.

## 1 PRIMER: WHAT IS HIV/AIDS?

Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is a virus that attacks the body's immune cells — the cells that fight infection. Because HIV weakens the immune system, it makes a person more vulnerable to other infections. HIV can be spread by contact with certain bodily fluids, so it is spread most commonly during unprotected sex or through sharing dirty needles, such as those used to inject drugs. Untreated HIV can cause acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS), where the body's immune system is severely damaged because of the virus. Without HIV medicine, people with AIDS typically have a life expectancy of around three years. If someone with AIDS develops an opportunistic infection (OI) — an infection that takes advantage of a weakened immune system — their life expectancy falls to about one year.

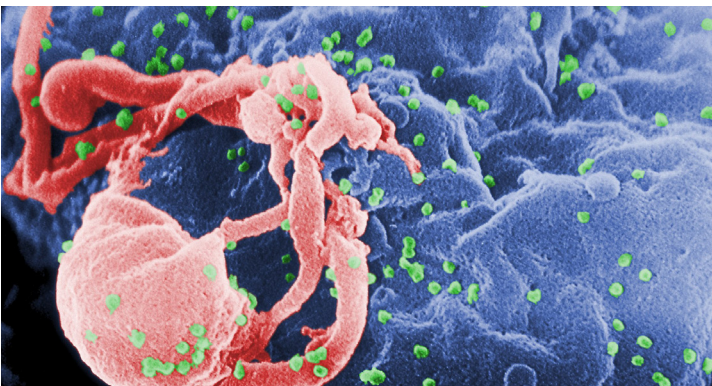
In a human with a healthy immune system, the number of CD4 cells per cubic millimeter (mm<sup>3</sup>) of blood is between 500 and 1,600 cells. CD4 cells are a type of white blood cell that play a crucial role in the immune system by finding and destroying invading bacteria, viruses and germs. A person with HIV is considered to have progressed to AIDS when their CD4 count falls to 200/mm<sup>3</sup>, or when they develop an OI. Some of the most common OIs in people with HIV/AIDS include the herpes simplex virus 1 (HSV-1), a virus that can cause sores on the lips and mouth and salmonella, a bacterial infection that affects the intestines.

The human body cannot get rid of HIV, and no effective cure exists as of now. But HIV medicine called antiretroviral therapy (ART) can prevent HIV from progressing to AIDS and also prevent the transmission of the virus to sexual partners. ART usually includes a combination of at least three antiretroviral drugs to suppress the HIV virus and stop its progression. Now, in the U.S., most people with HIV do not develop AIDS because they have access to ART. Additionally, medications like preexposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and postexposure prophylaxis (PEP) can help prevent a person from acquiring HIV if they may be or have been at risk of it, either from sexual intercourse with or exposure to the blood of an infected person.

Testing for HIV usually consists of a blood test or oral swab, and early detection can help prevent its spread and progression to AIDS. With proper medical care, people with HIV can live long lives. Though awareness and treatment have improved since the frightening AIDS epidemic of the 1980s and '90s, the medical community still is fighting for a cure.

### Discussion Questions for Employees

- ? Based on personal experience or historical knowledge, what do you already know about HIV/AIDS?
- ? How does our company offer to support people with the illnesses? Are they made to feel comfortable disclosing their condition?



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Public Health Image Library



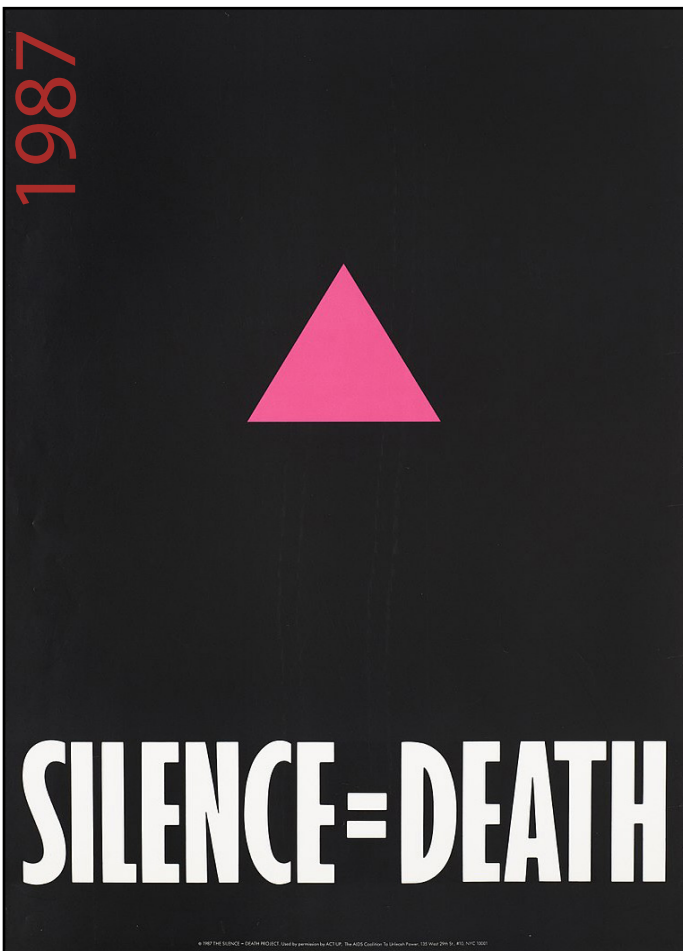
"Antiretroviral Drugs to Treat HIV Infection," NIAID, CC BY 2.0

## 2 HIV/AIDS: TIMELINE

Though the outbreak of HIV/AIDS is in relatively recent history, the shockwaves it sent through the U.S. and the world changed society, LGBTQ rights and the medical field. We recommend you continue your employees' cultural competence training with an overview of the important events that have affected the treatment of — and views toward — HIV/AIDS and the people who are infected.

### Discussion Questions for Employees

- ? Because the start of the AIDS epidemic was just a few decades ago, you or some of your employees may remember it. Take this opportunity to discuss the immediate effects the outbreak had on society. Did coverage of it spark misinformation and fear? How did people feel after more information became available?
- ? How is HIV/AIDS awareness and advocacy tied to other issues like race, socioeconomic status and LGBTQ rights?
- ? What role can we as individuals — or a company — play in advocating for people with HIV/AIDS and working toward a cure?



[Wellcome Collection. CC BY-NC](#)



["Earvin "Magic" Johnson, Inglewood, Calif., 1996," Cliff, CC BY 2.0](#)



National Institutes of Health

### 3 FACTS & FIGURES

After discussing the timeline, the next step is to review available data and understand demographics of people with HIV and AIDS and statistics important in continuing understanding of those living with the illness, because it is especially important for those responsible for recruiting people with diverse abilities.

The data we have selected presents racial/ethnic, gender, age, sexuality, drug use and other dependent areas, showing those affected by HIV come from diverse demographics.

#### Discussion Questions for Employees

- ? What does our company do to hire and support employees with disabilities and illnesses like HIV/AIDS? How do we promote these programs? Is it widely known what resources are available? If we don't have any programs currently in place, what are some ideas we can implement?
- ? With improved treatment options, people with HIV can live much longer, healthier lives. What can this mean for our company and the people we choose to hire?
- ? How does the contraction of AIDS relate to racial, sexual and socioeconomic demographics? How can we help break down barriers of privilege and disadvantage to make sure everyone has equal access to preventative education and treatment?



## 4 FACT CHECK: MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT HIV/AIDS

Misconceptions about people with HIV/AIDS have long fueled hysteria surrounding the illnesses and led to the fear and stigmatization of people who have them. People with HIV/AIDS deserve our support and care. The more we know about the conditions, the more power we have over them. Share this fact sheet with your employees to help dispel myths surrounding HIV/AIDS.

### Discussion Questions for Employees

- ? What are some common misconceptions about HIV, how it is spread and the people affected by it? How can these misconceptions lead to fear and fear lead to the marginalization of people with the disease?
- ? How can we use our knowledge to correct people's misconceptions about HIV/AIDS?
- ? How can having accurate knowledge about HIV/AIDS help us create a more inclusive environment?



"HIV Rapid Test Kit -- Orasure," Wheeler Cowperthwaite, CC BY 2.0



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**HOW YOU CAN GET HIV**  
**Know AIDS - Fight AIDS**

1<sup>st</sup> December - World AIDS Day  
End isolation - End stigma - End HIV transmission

 SEX WITHOUT CONDOM	 BLOOD TRANSFUSION	 SHARING INJECTING NEEDLES	 PASSED FROM MOTHER TO BABY
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DECEMBER IS AIDS AWARENESS MONTH

Satheesh Sankaran/Shutterstock.com

# Timeline

## Pre-1980

HIV is believed to have originated in what is now Congo around 1920 when the disease crossed from chimpanzees to humans. Sporadic cases of AIDS were documented before 1970, but data suggests the epidemic began in the late 1970s.

## 1981 Confirmed U.S. deaths: 234

- June** The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that from 1980–81, five young gay men in Los Angeles were treated for a rare lung disease called pneumocystis carinii pneumonia, which often attacks those with weakened immune systems. A 35-year-old gay man is the first person with AIDS to be admitted into the Clinical Center at the National Institutes of Health. He dies in October.
- July** The Bay Area Reporter, a newspaper for the gay and lesbian community in San Francisco, publishes its first mention of “Gay Men’s Pneumonia” and encourages gay men who are experiencing progressive shortness of breath to see their physicians. The CDC also reports that during the past 30 months, there were 26 cases of Kaposi’s Sarcoma (KS) reported among gay males. KS becomes one of the most common forms of cancer in people with HIV.
- Dec.** San Francisco nurse Bobbi Campbell, is the first KS patient to go public with his diagnosis. He calls himself the “KS Poster Boy” and writes a newspaper column for the San Francisco Sentinel about his experiences living with KS. Pediatric immunologist Dr. Arye Rubinstein treats infants exhibiting the same symptoms of illnesses affecting gay men. Three of the five are children of sex workers. His diagnoses are dismissed.

## 1982 Confirmed U.S. deaths: 853

- Jan.** Gay Men’s Health Crisis is founded in New York City, becoming the first community-based AIDS service provider.
- April** U.S. Rep. Henry Waxman convenes the first congressional hearings on AIDS at the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center in Hollywood.
- May** The New York Times publishes the first mention of the term “GRID” (gay-related immune deficiency).
- June** A gay activist group in San Francisco publishes the first pamphlet on “safer sex” and distributes it at the International Lesbian & Gay Freedom Day Parade.
- Sept.** The CDC first uses the official term AIDS.
- Dec.** The CDC publishes a paper on immunodeficiency and opportunistic infections in infants, and says there have been 22 cases. It says it is possible these children have AIDS but does not make a definitive diagnosis.

## 1983 Confirmed U.S. deaths: 2,304

- Jan.** Ward 86, the first outpatient clinic for men with AIDS, opens in San Francisco.
- May** The Kaposi’s Sarcoma Foundation sponsors the first AIDS candlelight vigils in San Francisco and New York. It is the first time that people with AIDS come together publicly. Photos of the event are circulated worldwide. Dr. Françoise Barré-Sinoussi and her colleagues at the Pasteur Institute in France report the discovery of a virus that could be the cause of AIDS. In 2008, she and her colleague, Dr. Luc Montagnie will be awarded the Nobel Prize in medicine for this discovery.
- Aug.** The U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Government Operations holds hearings on the federal response to AIDS.
- Nov.** The World Health Organization (WHO) holds its first meeting to assess AIDS globally.

## 1985 Confirmed U.S. deaths: 5,636

- March** The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approves the first HIV antibody test.
- July** The first AIDS Walk takes place in Los Angeles.
- Sept.** President Ronald Reagan uses the term “AIDS” for the first time publicly, calling it a “top priority” amid accusations his administration isn’t sufficiently funding AIDS research.
- Oct.** The U.S. Congress allocates nearly \$190 million for AIDS research.

## 1987 Confirmed U.S. deaths: 4,135

- March** AZT (zidovudine, Retrovir®) becomes the first anti-HIV drug approved by the FDA. ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power), an organization committed to direct action in ending the AIDS crisis, is founded. It holds its first protest on Wall Street.

## 1988 Confirmed U.S. deaths: 4,855

- Dec.** The first World AIDS Day is observed.

## 1991 Confirmed U.S. deaths: 20,454

- Nov.** NBA player Earvin “Magic” Johnson tells the world he has HIV. Freddie Mercury, lead singer of Queen, dies of complications with AIDS.

## 1992–2002 Cumulative U.S. deaths through 2002: 501,669

- Research and activism continue. New medications and tests are approved. Thousands of deaths continue to occur each year.
- 1996** The Broadway musical “Rent,” by Johnathan Larson, opens in January. The musical is about young artists in New York’s Alphabet City struggling to survive through poverty and the HIV/AIDS crisis. It was wildly successful and even adapted into a movie in 2005.
- 2000** Feb 7 is the first National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day in the U.S.

2003

- Oct. Oct. 15 becomes the first annual National Latinx AIDS Awareness Day in the U.S.
- Jan. President George W. Bush announces President's Emergency Plan For AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) in his State of the Union address, a five-year plan to combat AIDS worldwide.

2004

- Jan. Congress authorizes the first \$350 million for PEPFAR.
- March The FDA approves the use of oral fluid samples that give positive or negative HIV results within 20 minutes.

2005

- Jan. The World Economic Forum approves a set of new priorities, including focusing on HIV/AIDS in Africa and other hard-hit regions.
- May May 19 becomes the first National Asian and Pacific Islander HIV/AIDS Awareness Day in the U.S.

2006: 25 years since the first cases were reported

- March March 10 becomes the first annual National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day in the U.S.

2007

- March March 20 is the first annual observance of National Native HIV/AIDS Awareness Day in the U.S.

2008

- Sept. Sept. 18 is the first National HIV/AIDS and Aging Awareness Day in the U.S.
- Sept. 27 is the first National Gay Men's HIV/AIDS Awareness Day in the U.S.

2009

- Feb. The District of Columbia Department of Health's HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis, STD and TB Administration reports Washington has a higher rate of HIV (3%) than West Africa and describes it as a "severe and generalized epidemic."
- April The White House and CDC launch Act Against AIDS, a multiyear, multifaceted communication campaign to reduce HIV infection in the U.S. It is not called Let's Stop HIV Together.
- June June 8 is the first National Caribbean American HIV/AIDS Awareness Day in the U.S.

2010

- Jan. The U.S. government lifts the ban on travel and immigration on those with HIV.
- March President Barack Obama passes the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, which benefits patients who have chronic illnesses like HIV.

2012

- During AIDS 2012, the AIDS Memorial Quilt memorializing those infected with AIDS is displayed in its entirety in Washington, D.C., for the first time since 1996. Volunteers rotate nearly 50,000 panels to ensure that the entire work is visible.
- July The FDA approves the use of Truvada PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis), which can be taken regularly to prevent HIV in patients with a high risk of contracting the virus.

2013

- March NIH-funded scientists announce the first well-documented case of an HIV-infected child who appears to have been functionally cured of HIV infection, with no detectable levels of virus or signs of disease.
- April April 20 becomes the first National Youth HIV/AIDS Awareness Day in the U.S.
- June The National Minority AIDS Council (NMAC) releases RISE Proud: Combating HIV Among Black Gay and Bisexual Men, a plan to reduce the impact of HIV on Black gay and bisexual men.
- Dec. UNAIDS also announces that new HIV infections have dropped more than 50% in 25 low- and middle-income countries and that the number of people receiving antiretroviral treatment has increased.

2016

- April April 18 becomes the first National Transgender HIV Testing Day in the U.S.
- May The NIH and partners announce they will launch a large-scale HIV vaccine trial in South Africa in November 2016.

2017

- Jan. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation announces it will fund the development of implants that can deliver HIV-prevention medication continuously over a long period of time.

2019

- Feb. In his State of the Union address, President Donald Trump announces his goal to end the HIV epidemic in the United States in 10 years through prevention and treatment options.
- May NIH announces the launch of a trial to evaluate a long-acting form of ART for people who struggle to take ART daily in pill form.



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Official White House Photo by Lawrence Jackson



"The original Broadway cast of Rent from 1996," JessnKat, CC BY-SA 4.0.

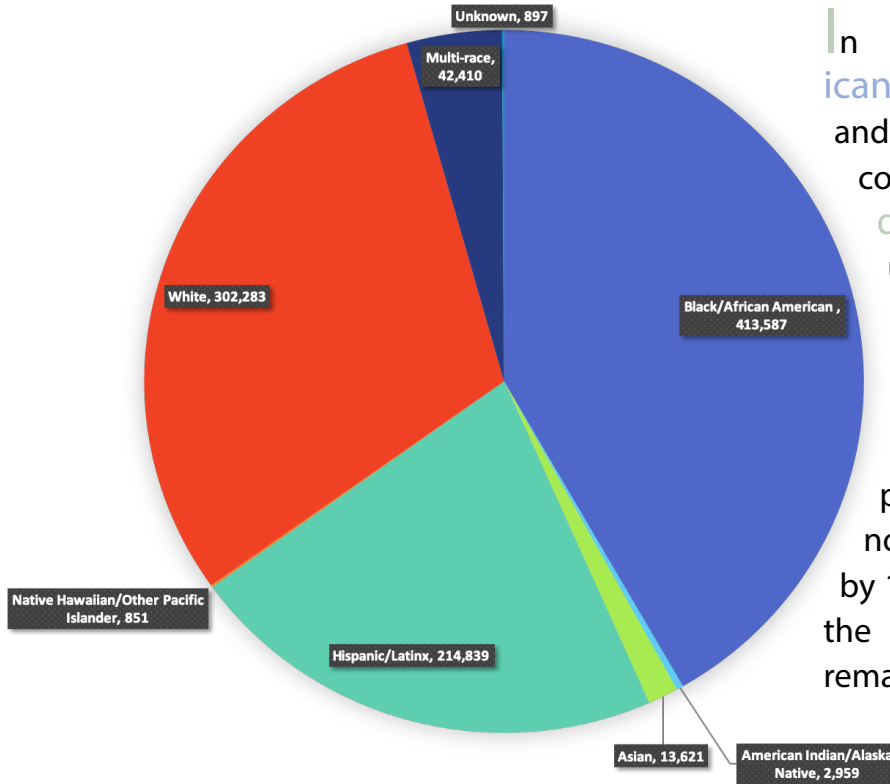
# Facts & Figures

## POPULATION

### People in the U.S. Living With HIV

~1 million

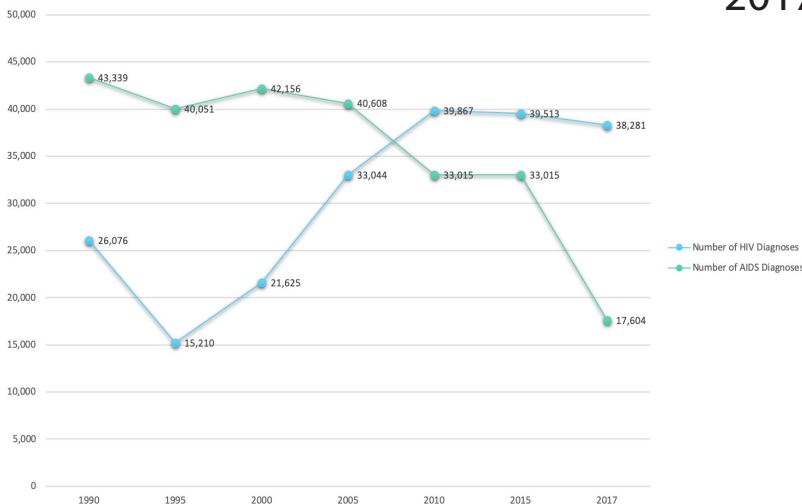
### Race/Ethnicity Breakdown



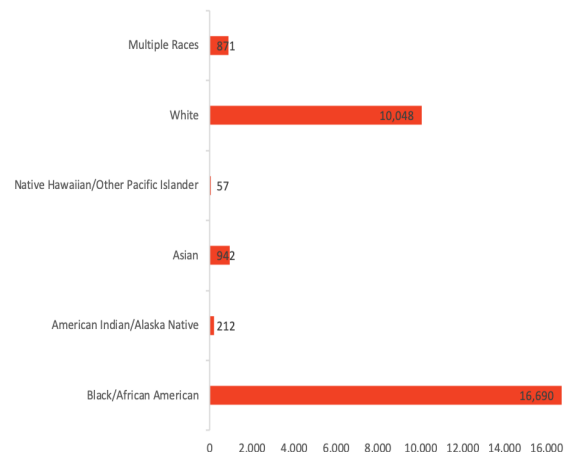
In 2017, **Black/African American** people accounted for **44%** and **Hispanic/Latinx** people accounted for **25%** of all **new HIV diagnoses** while only making up **13%** and **18%**, respectively, of the total population in the U.S.

For Black/African American people, the number of HIV diagnoses from 2010-2016 decreased by 12%. For Hispanic/Latinx people, the HIV diagnoses from 2010-2015 remained stable.

### Diagnoses Through the Years



### 2017 New Diagnoses by Race/Ethnicity





ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS

Thanks to better treatment options, people with HIV can live long lives.

In 1996, a 20-year-old person with HIV had a life expectancy of 39 years.

In 2000, a 20-year-old person with HIV had a life expectancy of 70 years.



LightField Studios/Shutterstock.com

Progress toward 90-90-90

The U.N.'s worldwide goal is to have 90% of people to know their HIV status, 90% of people with HIV be receiving treatment and 90% of people receiving treatment to have the virus suppressed by 2020.

As of 2017, 75% of people were aware of their HIV status, of which 79% were on treatment, of which 81% had their virus suppressed.

[World Map Grayscale](#), [WikipedianInternational](#), CC BY-SA 4.0

For a person diagnosed with HIV at age 35, the average lifetime cost of treatment is \$326,500.

The monthly medication cost ranges from \$1,854–\$4,545, depending on drug type and brand.

Resources for Employers

Business Responds to AIDS, a CDC program, helps organizations to implement resources, tools and policies to help reduce stigma and prevent discrimination against people with HIV in the workplace.

Visit <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/workplace>



STOPPING AIDS IS EVERYONE'S BUSINESS

CDC.gov

# Fact Check: Misconceptions About HIV/AIDS

Fear fueled misconceptions and stigma at the height of the AIDS crisis. Though information surrounding HIV/AIDS is more accessible now, some people still misunderstand the conditions, their effects and how HIV is spread. This fact check will clear up misconceptions and stigma and inform on how to effectively prevent HIV and AIDS.

**MISCONCEPTION:** HIV/AIDS can spread through touch or bodily fluids like tears, sweat, saliva or urine.

**FACT CHECK:** Breathing the same air, drinking from the same water fountain or touching the same surface as someone with the virus cannot infect you. Hugging, kissing, shaking hands, sharing eating utensils or using exercise equipment at a gym with someone with HIV also does not spread it. You can get HIV through blood, semen, vaginal fluids and breast milk. Several studies have also shown mosquitos cannot spread HIV. They do not inject the blood of others into you, and the virus does not live long inside of them.

**MISCONCEPTION:** Only gay people can get HIV.

**FACT CHECK:** Gay men make up two-thirds of new HIV diagnoses in the U.S., but it isn't because of who they are. A misconception is that gay men are acting less responsibly. However, research actually shows that they use condoms more often and take other precautions to protect themselves. Since the epidemic's beginning, rates of HIV in the gay community were high. Therefore, the chances of gay men coming into contact with the virus still are high.

Additionally, because of the type of cells and fluids in various body parts, anal sex is the riskiest form of sex for spreading HIV.

Regardless, straight people still can contract HIV. About 1 in 6 men and 3 in 4 women who have HIV got it from heterosexual contact. Oral sex, though less risky than other forms of sex, also can spread HIV.

Homophobia and stigma against the gay community can prevent LGBTQ people with HIV from seeking treatment or preventative measures.

**MISCONCEPTION:** HIV is a death sentence.

**FACT CHECK:** HIV is a chronic illness that there is currently no cure for. However, medical advances have allowed people to live long lives with the virus as they manage it.

**MISCONCEPTION:** You can tell if someone has HIV or AIDS by looking at them.

**FACT CHECK:** You cannot tell if someone has HIV just by looking at them. Additionally, some people do not show symptoms of HIV for years. The only way to know for sure is to take a test.

**MISCONCEPTION:** People getting treatment for HIV can't spread it.

**FACT CHECK:** HIV treatment can make the virus less detectable in the blood, but it can still spread. Additionally, if both members of a couple have HIV, they should still practice safe sex to prevent other, more treatment-resistant strains of the virus from spreading.

**MISCONCEPTION:** People with HIV are dirty, reckless or deviant.

**FACT CHECK:** These and other moral claims about people with HIV are not only inaccurate, but also they lead to discrimination. There are precautions people should take to prevent HIV transmission, but it can happen to anyone, regardless of race, class or sexual orientation. Equating people of certain races, classes or sexual orientations with the disease is xenophobic and ill-informed. Stigma is harmful. It can lead to HIV-positive people failing to seek treatment and suffering from other health issues, such as mental illness. Regardless of someone's HIV status, they still are worthy of respect and dignity.