

Five HIV Myths BUSTED

World AIDS Day 2016



Myth #1: If you have HIV you will get AIDS

FACT: If people living with HIV stay on ART, they will not get AIDS

The development of antiretroviral therapy has eliminated the occurrence of AIDS-related complications in much of the world. People living with HIV still experience an increase in some non-AIDS conditions such as cardiovascular, kidney, and liver disease and more research is needed to understand the complexities of aging and HIV.

Myth #2: If you have HIV you will always be a risk to your sexual partners



FACT: If an HIV+ person is virally suppressed there is almost no risk of sexual transmission of the virus

Results from the PARTNER Study suggest that the risk of transmitting HIV with a suppressed viral load during condomless sex is extremely low. This study does not suggest that condomless sex is completely safe but is valuable for couples to understand the personal level of transmission risk that they find acceptable. The PARTNER study group plans to complete a second phase for further follow-up in MSM couples.



Myth #3: If you have HIV and are pregnant, your baby will get HIV too

FACT: As long as pregnant women have access to appropriate medication, no babies need to be born with HIV

Vertical transmission of HIV in Canada is extremely rare; when taking ART for at least 4 weeks before delivery the rate of transmission is less than 0.5%. Unfortunately, there were three cases of vertical transmission of HIV in 2015. This highlights the need for every pregnant woman to get tested and the coordination of community and outreach groups to provide access to ART for all people living with HIV in Canada.

Myth #4: HIV is only a problem in Africa



FACT: HIV affects every country and continent. Some places in North America have HIV rates as high as some African countries

The most recent estimates from Health Canada suggest the rate of HIV diagnosis across Canada is 5.9 per 100,000 people. Although this number is relatively low, the rates are much higher in Saskatchewan (11.4) and Manitoba (9.2). On some reserves in Saskatchewan, the HIV rates are as high as 64 new infections per 100,000 people; rates that are as high as some African countries, said CTN researcher Dr. Mona Loutfy in an interview with CBC earlier this year.



Myth #5: I am not at risk of getting HIV

FACT: Everyone is at risk of getting HIV. Know your status. Get tested!

25 percent of people living with HIV in Canada don't know it

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