



## World AIDS Day

### What is HIV/AIDS?

HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus. HIV is an infection that can only be transmitted between humans. This virus attacks your immune system making your body weak against infections and other viruses. Your immune system is what your body uses as a defense to protect you from illnesses. When you have the HIV virus, it will stay with you and there is no cure available.



AIDS stands for Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome. AIDS is a disease that HIV can turn into. When a person has AIDS they can get other illnesses that are called *Opportunistic Infections*. These infections quickly deplete your immune system making it harder for your body to fight off other illnesses and infections; when

this happens a person can die.

Unfortunately there is no cure for HIV/AIDS; however there are great medicines that a person can take to help treat HIV. These medicines vary from person to person but can help someone with HIV live a very long time.

### How is HIV/AIDS Transmitted between People?

A person can become infected with HIV through contact with blood, sexual fluids, breastmilk, mother-to-baby exposure during the birthing process, and cerebral spinal fluid. The contact must come from someone who has HIV (whether they know it or not) in order to infect you. The virus cannot survive outside the body, or without being in a bodily fluid. Therefore, you cannot get HIV/AIDS by simply hugging someone with AIDS or being in casual contact with them. It is very important to always follow the *Blood-borne Pathogens Rule*: wear gloves and protective gear when handling someone else's bodily fluids, and always wash your hands with soap and warm water after handling bodily fluids.



### What is World AIDS Day?

World AIDS Day is celebrated on December 1<sup>st</sup>. This day originated at the 1988 World Summit of Ministers of Health Programs for AIDS Prevention. Since then, governments, international organizations, and charities around the world participate. This day is a special day for everyone who is *infected* and *affected* by HIV/AIDS. There are currently 190 countries across the entire world that raise awareness in their communities about HIV/AIDS. Part of the awareness raised includes the need of support and understanding for people living with HIV/AIDS. The developments of education and prevention initiatives are also the focus of this day. It is not just about raising money but increasing awareness, fighting prejudice and improving education. World AIDS Day is important in reminding people that HIV has not gone away; there is still much work that need to be done to fight this battle.

### Wear a Red Ribbon on December 1st!

The red ribbon has been the international symbol for AIDS Awareness since 1991 when it began by an organization called *Visual AIDS* in New York. This ribbon was created as a symbol of support for the growing number of people living with HIV or AIDS in the United States.

Take pride in your knowledge and wear a red ribbon on December 1<sup>st</sup>. Wearing a red ribbon is a simple and powerful way to challenge the stigma and prejudice that surrounds HIV/AIDS.

*Special thanks to Melissa Zmyslo for her help with this article!*



**The Berrien County Health Department has five locations to serve you:**

Benton Harbor			Niles	Three Oaks
769 Pipestone	M-139 Office	School Based	1205 N. Front St.	21 N. Elm
P.O. Box 706	2106 S. M-139	870 Colfax Ave	684-2800	756-2008
926-7121	927-5623	925-4500		

Or visit us on the web at [www.berriencohlthdept.org](http://www.berriencohlthdept.org)

### Berrien County Health Department:

Preventing Disease, Prolonging Life and Protecting the Health of the



### November is Breathe Easy Month!

Take a deep breath! For some this is not as easy as it sounds. This month the Berrien County Health Department has presented information about lung diseases, home breathing hazards, the hazards of smoking and ways to quit, and the Berrien County smoking regulation. For questions about any of these topics, please call the health department at **926-7121**.

### HIV/AIDS Facts:

- African-Americans make up 13% of the US population, but account for an estimated 49% of new HIV cases.
- Women most often get HIV from unprotected sex with an infected man (80% of transmission to women happens this way).
- Over 12,000 people in Michigan are known to be living with HIV/AIDS
- Without antiretroviral therapy, approximately 25% of pregnant women with HIV will transmit the disease to their child



HIV testing is available at the Berrien County Health Department by appointment only. Please call 927-5658 for the Benton Harbor office or 684-2800 for the Niles office to schedule an appointment. If you have any questions you may contact Melissa Zmyslo at: **926-7121 ex. 5259**.

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