



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 a virus, it means that you can never get rid of it because 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 ill-

nesses 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 Spread?

A person can become infected with HIV through contact with blood, sexual fluids, breast milk, mother-to-baby exposure during the birthing process, and spinal fluid. The contact must come from someone who has HIV (whether they know it or not) in order to infect you. The HIV virus needs a human to live in, so for blood a good rule to follow is "once it dries, it dies". For example, touching dried blood is a very small risk versus touching fresh blood. It is very important to always follow the *Bloodborne Pathogens Rule*: always wear gloves and Protection gear when handling bodily fluids of some one else, and always wash your hands with soap and warm water as often as possible.

What is World AIDS Day?

World AIDS Day is celebrated on December 1st. 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 raises 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 are still many more things 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 in the United States.

Take pride in your knowledge and wear a red ribbon on December 1st. 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!



Berrien County Health Department:

Preventing Disease, Prolonging Life and Protecting the Health of the Community.



November is Breathe Easy Month!

Take a deep breath! For some this is not as easy as it sounds. November is Breathe Easy month, so the Health Department will provide information about Lung Disease, Radon, the Great American Smoke Out, and World AIDS Day. For more information 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.

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

Benton Harbor

769 Pipestone
P.O. Box 706
926-7121

M-139 Office
2106 S. M-139
927-5623

Niles

1205 N. Front St.
684-2800

Three Oaks

21 N. Elm
756-2008

Or visit us on the web at www.bchdmi.org

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