

HEALTH

Most HIV Infections Not Treated

Raising health risks and transmission to others

(AP) -- Nearly three quarters of the 1.2 million Americans with HIV do not have their infection under control, raising the risk of death from AIDS and transmission to others, according to a new study released for World AIDS Day on Wednesday, Dec. 1.

One in five people with human immunodeficiency virus are unaware that they have the disease, added the report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Among people who know their HIV status is positive, only about half (51 percent) get ongoing medical treatment, said the CDC's Vital Signs report.

Of all people in the United States who have HIV, whether they know it or not, 36 percent take antiretroviral therapy and 28 percent have a low amount of the virus in their body.

Treatment with antiretroviral drugs has been shown to suppress levels of the virus in 77 percent of people who follow the regimen, and studies have shown it can



An AIDS symbol is displayed on the North Lawn of the White House in Washington, D.C. Nearly three quarters of Americans with HIV do not have their infection under control, raising the risk of death from AIDS and transmission to others, according to a study released Tuesday.

cut the risk of transmission to a partner by 96 percent.

But while new cases of HIV have leveled off at about 50,000 in the United

States each year, with 16,000 people dying annually of AIDS, more must be done to make sure people get tested and treated, authorities said.

"We are in a time of new hope for stopping HIV, and this week's World AIDS Day is a time to acknowledge that," CDC director Thomas Frieden said, urging a new push by all levels of government.

"The bottom line is we have the tools to stop HIV from spreading in the individual patient and we have the tools to greatly reduce its spread in communities," Frieden said.

"First is to increase the proportion of people who know their status. Knowledge is power," he told reporters.

"Second, to make sure that people with HIV have every opportunity to remain in ongoing care after they're diagnosed."

Black men who have sex with men are a particularly high-risk group, with African-American gay males accounting for 27 percent of all new infections in the United States, according to CDC data.

Also, more than a third of young black homosexual men are infected with HIV, more than twice the level seen in white gay men. Surveys also suggest a full 60 percent of black gay men living with HIV do not know they are HIV positive.

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