

HIV-AIDS: Vaccine day

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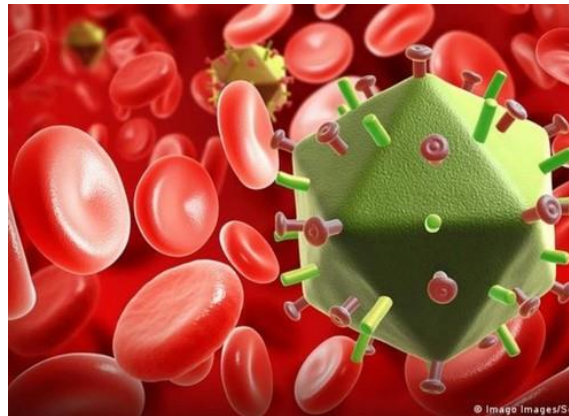
HIV diagnosis & prevention



HIV/AIDS impairs an infected person's T cells. The infection can spread through blood transmission, sharing needles, and unprotected sex. India is home to the world's third-largest HIV/AIDS infected population with over 2 million confirmed cases including over 2.5 lac deaths recorded in 2020.

After the first infection, a person may suffer no symptoms or a brief period of flu-like symptoms such as fever, joint pains, body ache, and enlarged lymph nodes, which is usually followed by a long period of asymptomatic recovery. As the infection advances, the immune system becomes more vulnerable, as seen by a fall in CD4 cell count in the blood. This puts the patient at risk for developing illnesses like TB, P. carinii pneumonia and cancers like Kaposi sarcoma, uncommon in people with healthy immune systems. AIDS refers to a later stage onset of infectious symptoms diagnosed by a bloodtest.

Stigma and prejudice continue to be substantial limitations to the treatment and management of HIV in high-risk communities. There is a need to strengthen the link between testing and treatment to ensure that those diagnosed can undergo specialized care and treatment.



Stress is quite common among those with AIDS, if you have also had a headache, irregular sleeping patterns or fatigue ensure you have the Gigadocs app ready. Gigadocs facilitates the booking of doctor's appointments online and helps you consult with the best doctors available near you, at a time convenient to you from the secure privacy of your home. HIV testing is available in several places, including standalone clinics, health centres, and public-private partnership enabled care centres. Mobile testing units that provide community-based testing offer an early diagnosis to first-time testers and those who do not frequently use clinical services. Community-based testing fights the stigma around HIV patients and the criminalization of populations at high risk who may not feel too comfortable attending standalone clinics and health facilities.



World AIDS Vaccine Day, also known as HIV Vaccine Awareness Day, is observed annually on May 18. It addresses the continued urgent need for a vaccine to prevent HIV infection and AIDS.

In 1998, the first World AIDS Vaccine Day was observed to celebrate the first anniversary of President Bill Clinton's speech in which he underlined the necessity of recognizing this Day and the hard work put behind developing an effective vaccine. From then on, every year 18th of May is designated as the HIV Vaccine Awareness Day (HIVAD).

"HIV Vaccine Research: Building on Lessons from COVID" is AIDS Vaccine Advocacy Coalition (AVAC)'s theme for HIV Vaccine Awareness Day 2021. This theme explains how the COVID experience might help accelerate vaccine research and delivery for HIV, tuberculosis, malaria, and other diseases.

There is no cure for HIV, though antiretroviral therapy (ART) can help decrease the virus's reproduction. This highlights the importance of prevention, including raising awareness, practicing safe sex, and preventing needle sharing, and testing at-risk persons early. Vaccines work by boosting the immune system to protect the body from infection. The development of a safe and effective vaccine will go a long way toward protecting people from contracting HIV.

Currently, there is no authorized HIV vaccine, but extensive research initiatives are ongoing. Even a marginally effective vaccine can help to control the pandemic by lowering transmission. However, the virus's rapid genetic mutation, the inability of antibodies to kill the virus, and the risk of viral replication pose numerous challenges to vaccine development.



On this day, volunteers remind people that our collective efforts can prevent HIV and that each of us can play a crucial role in avoiding the spread and easing the burden. World AIDS Vaccine Day is usually commemorated through events held all around the world. However, due to the COVID-19 epidemic and lockdown, no events were held this year.

