

BLACK AIDS INSTITUTE fact SHEET



What Black Bikers (and Others) Need to Know about HIV



*"When you know better,
you do better"*
—Maya Angelou

The AIDS crisis is not over! Despite improvements in HIV treatment, HIV/AIDS continues to disproportionately affect the Black community.

Did you know?

- It is estimated that there are between 800,000 and 900,000 people living with HIV in the U.S. One in four of those do not even know that they have HIV.
- A study of young MSM in six U.S. cities found that 91 percent of the HIV-positive African Americans in this study did not know their HIV status.
- HIV/AIDS was among the leading causes of death for Black men and women in the U.S.
- Blacks are 12 percent of the U.S. population, but represent over 50 percent of all new HIV infections.
- Nearly 185,000 Blacks have died of AIDS in the U.S.
- Black women represent 72 percent of new HIV infections among women in the U.S.
- Black youth ages 13-19 represent 65 percent of the reported AIDS cases among youth in 2002, even though they are only 15 percent of the U.S. population.
- Black Americans have the poorest AIDS survival rates of all racial and ethnic groups.

The truth about HIV/AIDS in the Black community

- No matter if you are Black, white, rich, poor, straight or gay, if you engage in certain *behaviors* you place yourself at risk for becoming HIV infected. Some behaviors that place you at risk are:
- Engaging in unprotected sexual activity, particularly if you have had multiple partners.



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"We African Americans have been reluctant to own the AIDS epidemic to acknowledge the devastating toll it is taking on our communities."
—Harlon Dalton, author, *AIDS in Blackface*

"Nobody can help us, but us."
—Calvin Rolark

- Using unsterilized needles/syringes, particularly for injecting drugs.
- Racism, poverty and inadequate access to health care play an important role in increased HIV infections in Black communities.
- Poverty, drug use and homophobia are not unique to the Black community, but when combined with conspiracy fears, mistrust of government agencies and racism they become barriers to HIV prevention and treatment efforts.
- Many Black folks do not believe they are at risk, thinking, "HIV happens to other folks who are not at all like me."
- Stigma in our community prevents us from talking openly about sex and sexuality.
- We have less access to treatment, less accurate health information and sometimes may involve ourselves in networks of people who infect one another and do not know it.
- Black men and women may not be aware of their partners' HIV status or of the behaviors they engage in that place them at risk.

Now that you know, what can you do?

- **Get educated:** make sure you know the *facts* not just the myths about HIV/AIDS. Learn about HIV/AIDS and protect yourself and those you love through safer sex practices, clean needle use and prenatal care.
- **Get tested:** it may be hard, but you owe it to yourself to know. Go to your local health department, clinic or community-based organization and ask for a free HIV test.
- **Get treated:** If you are HIV positive, take an active role in maintaining your health. New treatments offer hope to people living with HIV. These drugs can slow down the reproduction and progression of HIV. When HIV cannot reproduce and progress, people live longer and stay healthier. The earlier you care for yourself the better health outcomes you will have.
- **Get involved:** Speak the truth about HIV/AIDS in the Black community; talk to family, friends, co-workers. Volunteer at a local community-based organization. Because if we want to end the HIV/AIDS epidemic in our communities, we have to take responsibility for altering its course.

Remember

There is currently NO cure for AIDS
There is currently NO vaccine that can prevent or treat HIV infection

Find out more

Visit www.BlackAIDS.org and find other fact sheets on HIV testing and HIV vaccines.

THE FOUR GETS

FOUR STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TO FIGHT AIDS IN YOUR COMMUNITY:

- 1 GET INFORMED.** What you don't know can kill you. Knowledge is a powerful weapon against HIV/AIDS.
- 2 GET TESTED.** The vast majority of Black Americans infected with the AIDS virus don't even know it. You can't protect yourself or your partner if you don't know your status.
- 3 GET TREATED.** 70 percent of HIV-positive people in America are not in proper treatment and care. AIDS is not the death sentence it once was. Early treatment can prolong your life.
- 4 GET INVOLVED.** AIDS is spreading through our communities because not enough of us are involved in efforts to stop it. There are many ways to get involved in the fight:
 - Volunteer
 - Make a donation
 - Become a regular contributor
 - Join a board
 - Deliver a meal
 - Talk to your neighbors, friends and family about HIV/AIDS
 - Write a letter to your Mayor, Governor, the President

Black Voices ON AIDS