

HIV and AIDS and the LGBTQ+ Community



54% of
Americans
living with
HIV are 50+
years old and
at a higher risk
for diabetes,
hypertension
and stroke.

HIV and AIDS Overview

HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is a virus that attacks the immune system, specifically CD4 cells (T cells), which help the immune system fight off infections.

AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome) is the final stage of HIV infection when the immune system is severely damaged, and the body struggles to fight infections and diseases.

HIV is primarily transmitted through unprotected sexual intercourse, sharing needles for drug use, mother-to-child transmission during childbirth or breastfeeding, and less commonly, through blood transfusions or organ transplants.

While there is no cure for HIV, it can be effectively managed with antiretroviral therapy (ART), allowing individuals to lead long and healthy lives.

Preventive measures include regular testing, education about safer sex practices for older adults, and access to prophylactic materials.

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Education and HIV/AIDS

Comprehensive Sex Education:

- Comprehensive sex education programs are essential to provide accurate information about HIV and AIDS, promote safe sexual practices, and reduce stigma.
- These programs should cover topics such as the transmission of HIV, prevention methods (condom use, PrEP, PEP), and the importance of getting tested regularly.

Raising Awareness:

- Education efforts should aim to reduce stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV (PLWHIV), emphasizing that HIV is a medical condition, not a moral judgment.
- Public health campaigns can highlight the importance of regular testing, early diagnosis, and prompt initiation of treatment.

Access to Healthcare:

- Promote access to healthcare services, especially in underserved communities, to ensure that PLWHIV receives appropriate care and support.
- Ensure healthcare providers are trained to offer culturally competent and LGBTQ+-friendly care.

Educating your healthcare staff:

SAGECare has designed a 1-hour course HIV and Aging to educate and guide your team through the extensive information on HIV and Aging.

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LGBTQ+ Community and HIV/AIDS

Disproportionate Impact:

- The LGBTQ+ community, particularly gay and bisexual men, transgender individuals, and people of color, face a higher risk of HIV infection.
- Stigma, discrimination, and socioeconomic disparities can contribute to this increased vulnerability.

Tailored Prevention:

- HIV prevention efforts should be tailored to the specific needs of the LGBTQ+ community.
- Promoting regular testing, access to PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis), and promoting condom use are crucial to prevention strategies.
- Having testing events every six months as well as safer sex demonstrations, are vital to a healthier community.

Support and Advocacy:

- LGBTQ+ organizations are vital in advocating for the rights and healthcare access of LGBTQ+ individuals living with or at risk of HIV.
- Support networks and community-based organizations are essential for emotional and social support.

Ending Stigma:

Stigma around HIV and AIDS can be particularly harmful in the LGBTQ+ community. Education and advocacy should work to reduce this stigma and foster a more inclusive and accepting society.

Education, awareness, and support are crucial in the fight against HIV and AIDS, with specific attention needed to address the needs of the LGBTQ+ community. A holistic approach that combines education, access to healthcare and destigmatization efforts is necessary to combat the HIV/AIDS effectively epidemic and promote a healthier, more inclusive society.