



## HIV/AIDS FACTS

While great progress has been made in the fight against AIDS, much work still remains. Life expectancy continues to increase, thanks to patient access to integrated quality health care and services made possible by people like those who participate in AIDS Walk Wisconsin & 5K Run. Pledges raised through the walk/run have contributed to 89% of patients at the AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin achieving an undetectable viral load, meaning their HIV is managed as best as is possible. That is 12% better than the average of all HIV specialty clinics in America. However, HIV/AIDS is still impacting lives in Wisconsin. For example, if you are a gay man in America you have a 1 in 6 chance of contracting HIV in your lifetime; if you are a gay man of color, the chance increases to 1 in 2. Today, more than ever, the fight against AIDS needs your support.

### What are the numbers?

- As of the end of 2015, **6,898** individuals reported with HIV or AIDS are presumed to be living in Wisconsin.
- The Centers for Disease Control estimates that **13% of all persons living with HIV do not know they are infected, bringing actual prevalence of HIV in Wisconsin closer to 7,900.**
- In 2015, there were **225 new HIV** cases reported in Wisconsin.
  - **80%** were attributed to men who have sex with men, including those who also injected drugs.
  - **16%** of were attributed to high-risk heterosexual contact.
  - **4%** were attributed to injection drug use.
- HIV infections have been reported in **33 of the 72 counties in Wisconsin**, with highest concentration in Milwaukee County being 53%.
- HIV infection disproportionately affects racial/ethnic minorities. During 2015, **62% of new diagnoses were among racial/ethnic minorities**, despite minorities making up just 17% of Wisconsin's population.
- **Six out of 10** teenagers who are HIV positive don't even know they have the disease
- HIV is a disease that affects people regardless of age, gender, race, socioeconomic status and sexual orientation.

### HIV vs. AIDS

**HIV** (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is a virus that attacks and breaks down the body's immune system, making it difficult for the body to fight disease. When the immune system becomes weak, we lose our protection against illness and can develop serious and even life-threatening infections and/or cancer.

**AIDS** (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) is the condition people with HIV develop if they have one of the serious infections connected to HIV, or if blood tests show that their immune system has been very badly damaged by the virus. AIDS is the last and most severe stage of the HIV infection.

- It usually takes several years before HIV breaks down the immune system badly enough to cause AIDS. Most people have few, if any symptoms for several years after contracting HIV. However, once HIV enters the blood stream, it can seriously compromise the immune system. It is important to note that not all people with HIV develop AIDS, and not all people with HIV die.

## Methods of HIV Transmission

People with HIV can only pass on the disease when certain bodily fluids enter the bloodstream of another person. These include blood, semen, vaginal fluids and breast milk. The three main ways these bodily fluids can enter another person's bloodstream are:

- Unprotected Sex - having sex without a condom, including oral, anal and vaginal
- Needle Sharing - the use of contaminated needles associated with IV drug use, steroid injection, tattoos and blood rituals
- Mother-to-Child - through pregnancy, childbirth or breastfeeding
- HIV **cannot** be transmitted through casual contact, including kissing or hugging. HIV is not transmitted through coughing, sneezing, toilet seats, phones, water fountains, sharing food and drink, or insect bites. No evidence exists that the virus can be transmitted through tears, saliva or sweat.

## Who is at Risk?

- Anyone can contract HIV, regardless of age, race, sexual orientation or socioeconomic status. Your risk is dependent on your activities. Even if you are part of a community with a high infection rate, you can avoid getting HIV. Staying uninfected requires thought, planning and open communication. Often it means discussing issues that may be uncomfortable. Make it easier by getting all the facts, talking with people you trust, and talking with people who are in the same situation.

**For more information on HIV/AIDS, please visit the following websites:**

- AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin  
<http://www.arcw.org/>
- The Wisconsin HIV/ STD/ Hepatitis C Information and Referral Center  
<http://www.irc-wisconsin.org/>
- Wisconsin HIV/AIDS Program  
<http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/aids-hiv/>