

# World AIDS Day (December 1), AIDS Awareness Week (November 24 to December 1) & Aboriginal AIDS Awareness Week (December 1 - December 5)

## Help Raise Awareness

Saskatchewan is working hard to reduce its high rates of new HIV infections.

Part of this effort is providing education and increasing awareness. World AIDS Day, AIDS Awareness Week and Aboriginal AIDS Awareness Week are special times designated for this purpose.

## HIV 101: The Facts

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is a virus that attacks the immune system. The immune system helps your body fight off infection.

HIV can lead to an Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) if not treated with medication.

There is no cure for HIV, but it can be treated.

People living with HIV can have healthy lives, relationships and children. Medication can lower the amount of virus in the body. People with lower amounts of virus are less likely to pass on the infection to others.

HIV can be spread by:

- Sexual contact (unprotected vaginal, anal and oral).
- Blood contact
  - sharing needles, syringes and other drug use equipment;
  - sharing equipment used for tattooing, piercing or acupuncture.
- Pregnancy, delivery or breastfeeding (A pregnant woman with HIV may pass it on to her child without proper treatment during pregnancy and delivery).

## Make Change Happen



- Recognize and help others understand that there are people living with HIV /AIDS in Saskatchewan and Canada.
- Challenge stigmas and misinformation about HIV by learning about the disease . A lot has changed over the years and HIV is no longer the “death sentence” it was once thought to be. Treatment and medication have evolved, and with proper care ,people living with HIV can live healthy lives.
- Understand that there are many ways of acquiring HIV ,and that everyone engaging in these activities are at risk regardless of age, gender or ethnicity.
- Promote acceptance and respect for those living with HIV/AIDS.
- Show support for people who are living or have lived with HIV/AIDS.
- “Say YES to the Test”. Knowing your HIV status is the most powerful thing you can do in reducing the spread of HIV. HIV testing is now being offered routinely so you may be asked if you’d like to be tested. If you think you have ever been at risk, ask to get tested.

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While showing support should be done 365 days a year, these are special times set aside throughout the world to acknowledge the unified efforts of raising awareness, preventing transmission and improving the lives of those living with HIV/AIDS.

## Suggested Awareness Activities

- Wear red
- Hand out red ribbons (the official icon of AIDS awareness)
- Decorate a tree outside your home, school or workplace red
- Set up an information booth
- Talk to your friends and co-workers about HIV/AIDS
- Get tested for HIV
- Volunteer at a local organization
- Participate in organized events (scavenger hunts, condom crawls, etc)
- Organize a parade or flash mob
- Share educational and reputable website links/videos
- Have a red item bake sale and donate profits
- Balloon Bomb (tie red balloons to trees/posts/etc - be mindful of restrictions and cleaning up afterwards)
- Write words of support on sticky notes and decorate a wall
- Show your respect at candle light vigils and other memorials honouring people living with HIV/AIDS
- Organize a trivia game and help clarify fact from fiction
- Have a "guess the number of red jellybeans" contest
- Hang awareness posters in the lunchroom at work
- Speak to community leaders
- Make a donation to a local HIV/AIDS organization

## Learn More & Locate Resources

### Saskatchewan HIV Collaborative

- [www.skshiv.ca](http://www.skshiv.ca)

This website has information for the general public and health care providers specific to HIV/AIDS in the province. This includes the Saskatchewan testing policy & routine HIV testing kit, testing locations and links for community based organizations (CBOs) and AIDS service organizations (ASOs).

### Saskatchewan Ministry of Health

- [www.saskatchewan.ca/hiv](http://www.saskatchewan.ca/hiv)

Includes provincial HIV statistics, related publications and testing locations.

### Saskatchewan Organizations

- [www.aidssaskatoon.ca](http://www.aidssaskatoon.ca)
- [www.allnationshope.ca](http://www.allnationshope.ca)
- [www.aidsprogramssouthsask.com](http://www.aidsprogramssouthsask.com)
- [www.aidsnetworksaskatoon.ca](http://www.aidsnetworksaskatoon.ca)
- [www.outsaskatoon.ca](http://www.outsaskatoon.ca)

### World AIDS Day & AIDS Awareness Week

- [www.cdnids.ca](http://www.cdnids.ca)
- [www.unaids.org](http://www.unaids.org)
- [www.worldaidsday.org](http://www.worldaidsday.org)

### Aboriginal AIDS Awareness Week

- [www.caan.ca](http://www.caan.ca)
- [www.naho.ca](http://www.naho.ca)
- [www.aboriginalaidsawareness.com](http://www.aboriginalaidsawareness.com)

