

Important Key Points

QUICK FACTS: HIV/AIDS in Canada

HIV/AIDS diagnosis is no longer a death sentence.

- Unconditional love and a nonjudgmental attitude towards those living with HIV/AIDS is paramount
- “In everything, do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.” Matthew 7:12
- It is vital that the position of the church be one that provides a nonjudgmental and compassionate approach to serving the needs of those living with HIV/AIDS without questioning the guilt or innocence of the person.

Dialogue is key in order to break barriers

“In dialogue we affirm hope. In the midst of the many divisions, conflicts and violence there is hope that it is possible to create a human community that lives in justice and peace. Dialogue is not an end in itself. It is a means of building bridges of respect and understanding. It is a joyful affirmation of life for all.” (Ecumenical Considerations for Dialogue. World Council of Churches.)

Get tested and seek treatment early if necessary

Without any treatment, it takes approximately 10 years to progress from initial HIV infection to AIDS. People with access to effective anti-HIV treatments have seen this process slow down considerably. Many people with HIV who are receiving treatment may not advance to an AIDS diagnosis as quickly.

- Every 3 hours, a person is infected with HIV in Canada.
- People from countries where HIV is endemic make up 14% of new HIV infections in Canada, but only 2.5% of the population.
- 25% of those living with HIV in Canada do not know their HIV status
- The progression of the disease can be slowed down with antiretroviral treatment (ART) but cannot be stopped or reversed.
- More than 35 million people have died from AIDS since it first began, almost 30 years ago. Today virtually the same number live with HIV
- ART cannot cure HIV, but it can help people infected with HIV live longer, healthier lives.

Where can I go for Anonymous HIV Testing?

In Ottawa Call 613.295.9574

Outside Ottawa Call 1-800-668-2437

Put your mind at rest. Take the test. Free, Quick & Easy.



The following Pastors and Faith Leaders have endorsed this brochure:

Pastor Yves Kiringa - Build the Bridge Church
Pastor Kofi Dartey - Transforming Life Centre, Carleton University Branch
Pastor George Zimmerman - St. David and St. Martin Presbyterian Church
Pastor Peter Mwaiteleke - Christ Chapel Bible Church
Pastor Joseph Kiirya - River Jordan Ministries
Pastor Alfred Ogbumor - One Flock One Shepherd Ministries
Pastor Carmen Hamilton - Jubilee Apostolic Church
Wondimu Senbeto, Church Elder - Oromo Evangelical Church
Pastor Brian Jarvis - Bethel Pentecostal Church
Pastor Collins Ace

Somerset West Community Health Centre (SWCHC)

55 Eccles Street
Ottawa, ON K1R 6S3

📍 www.swchc.on.ca

☎ 613-238-8210

✉ info@swchc.on.ca

📱 @SWCHC

📘 somersetwestchc

📺 SWCHC



African, Caribbean & Black HIV Prevention Program

Christian Churches & HIV/AIDS



Christian Churches and HIV/AIDS

What is HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus)?

It is a virus that attacks the immune system, resulting in a chronic, progressive illness that leaves people vulnerable to infections. As the virus spreads, it weakens the body's ability to protect itself from other illnesses.

What is AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome)?

- 'Acquired' means that the virus cannot be inherited genetically from your parents, but is introduced to the body by exposure to bodily fluids containing HIV.
- A 'syndrome' is a collection of different symptoms or signs of disease. People with advanced HIV can become more susceptible to contracting different opportunistic infections.

How do you get HIV?

- Having unprotected sex
- Sharing needles, syringes or other equipment when using drugs (including steroids)
- Vertical HIV transmission (baby can get HIV during pregnancy, childbirth or breast feeding) from HIV positive mother
- If you received a blood transfusion, transplanted organ or sperm donation in Canada before 1986 (since then, screening has made the risk of infection almost non-existent)

You cannot get infected with HIV from:

- Shaking hands, hugging, kissing
- Coughs, sneezes, giving blood, swimming pools, toilet seats
- Sharing eating utensils, water fountains, mosquitoes and other insect bites

Who is susceptible to HIV infection and who can get HIV or AIDS?

Any human being is a potential host and is susceptible to infection. The virus does not discriminate, and it is not bound by geography, as HIV infections are found in every part of the world.

Why the churches and HIV/AIDS?

There is an opportunity for churches to promote HIV/AIDS prevention and support those infected and affected with the disease through acceptance, worship services, pastoral care outreach and working with community services providers. Christian churches play a substantial and meaningful role in community well-being because of the context in which they are rooted. Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" "I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Genesis 4:9). Yes, we are all called to be mindful of our brothers and sisters.

Does our Christian Faith Matter?

Many people turn to their communities of faith for support and guidance when they face problems and challenges in their lives. Faith communities and their leaders touch the lives of many people. They have a history of using their belief system and teachings to help their members understand others and to accept differences.

Is there stigma around HIV/AIDS?

Yes. Stigma thrives on ignorance and fear, and robs people of their God-given dignity. People are ignorant of the basic facts about HIV/AIDS. They stigmatize and avoid those living with HIV for fear of infection. "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 7:12)

How can Christians fight HIV/AIDS stigma?

Jesus is the ultimate example of selflessness and sacrifice. Believers are mandated to be imitators of God and to live a life of love (Ephesians 5:1-2, 22). The intimation is to become like God himself (Matthew 5:44; Luke 6:36; 2 Peter 2:21). There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:28). The ministry of Jesus is highly instructive on how the Body of Christ is to respond to the stigmatized: "Jesus mixed with them, included them, invited them into his circle of friends, touched them and, in turn, allowed himself to be touched by them. (Mark 1:40-45). Love for God is the foundational factor for loving one's neighbour. Love for God and love for humankind must support and pervade one another. For Jesus, the concepts of love and neighbour are as broad as human need. We are all created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:27); He is the potter and we are the clay, the work of His hands (Isaiah 64:8)

Myths and Misconceptions about HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS spreads mostly because of poor moral choices

Not true. Do not be quick to judge. (1 John 3:20). You can live a holy life and can still contract HIV.

HIV/AIDS is no longer a problem in developed countries like Canada, U.S.

Not true. HIV is a global concern. To date, more than 75,000 people live with HIV in Canada. African, Caribbean and Black (ACB) communities in Canada continue to be disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS; with one in seven Canadians living with HIV being of ACB descent. The high rate of HIV/AIDS infections is causing instability in many countries and reversing the progress made in development. Every community is affected.

I am HIV positive - my life is over

Not true. If you receive proper treatment and care, you can live a healthier longer life. HIV treatment can be free. With treatment and support, people have lived with HIV for over 30 years.

I could tell if my partner was HIV positive.

Not true. One cannot tell if a person has HIV or not by looking at the physical appearance. The only way for you or your partner to know if you're HIV-positive is to get tested. You can be HIV-positive and not have any symptoms for years.

There's nothing I can do.

Not true. Everyone can do something. First know the facts; then teach, pray and care for those infected and affected by HIV in your church, school, and community.