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December 2023 | Volume 4, Issue 12



December 1st is World AIDS Day

December is an opportunity to increase HIV/AIDS awareness, and to speak out against the stigma surrounding the transmission of the virus. Spreading knowledge on HIV/AIDS is particularly important for those of us who live in Southern California and the many other hotspot locations throughout the US. In 2021, there were 5,051 people living with HIV in San Bernardino County, with 301 people being newly diagnosed. Neighboring counties are faring much worse with 50,466 people living with HIV in Los Angeles County, and 602 individuals being newly diagnosed with the virus in 2021.

Zooming out to the broader context of California, the situation remains equally disconcerting since there are approximately 136,091 people living with HIV in California as of 2021. This indicates that half of the people diagnosed with HIV in California reside within Southern California alone. This is an issue that hits close to home and remains a major global public health issue, having claimed upwards of 40 million lives so far with ongoing transmission all over the world.

What is HIV/AIDS?

Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is an infection that attacks the body's immune system, specifically white blood cells whose function is to attack bacteria and viruses that may enter our bodies. HIV is most commonly spread through unprotected sex. Once a person's immune system is compromised, their body is less able to fight off infections and illnesses. When HIV is left untreated, the infected person is considered to have Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) which means the immune system is made less effective by HIV. AIDS is the most advanced and life-threatening stage of HIV and can only be acquired as a result of contracting HIV.

HIV is a preventable disease. However, once someone contracts HIV, they retain the disease for life since there is no cure. But there are treatments and medications that can help an infected person

live long and healthy lives. These treatments can also lower or stop the chances of an infected person spreading the disease to others by making their viral load undetectable. “Viral load” is the amount of HIV found within someone’s blood. This is measured as the number of viral particles per millimeter of blood.

Transmission and Prevention

HIV is carried in semen, blood, vaginal fluids, anal mucus, and breast milk. HIV cannot be spread through airborne transmissions such as sneezing, spitting, or coughing, regardless of viral load detectability. Other misconceptions surrounding the spread of HIV is that it can be contracted through physical touch or objects such as dishes, toilets, and doorknobs.

The most common transmissions of HIV occur due to:

- Having unprotected vaginal or anal sex
- Sharing needles or syringes for drugs, piercings, tattoos, etc.
- Getting stuck with a needle that has HIV-infected blood on it
- Getting HIV-infected blood, semen, or vaginal fluids into open cuts or sores on your body
- Mother-to-child transmission during pregnancy, during labor, or breast feeding

Some of the ways you can reduce the risk of HIV is by:

- Having protected sex by using condoms
- Abstinence (not engaging in any sexual activities)
- Being tested for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections regularly

Doctors may suggest medical treatments such as antiretroviral therapy (ART) for those who are at higher risk of contracting or spreading the disease. ART’s are usually in the form of oral medications that must be taken daily. These medications act as long-lasting agents that prevent the virus from replicating within the blood. ART’s can be prescribed for individuals with HIV-positive partners, or to a mother who is going to give birth or is planning to breastfeed their child.

Signs and Symptoms

Many people may notice influenza-like symptoms after a few months of contracting the virus. However, those first few months is when the disease is the most infectious. These symptoms can be mistaken for other less serious illnesses.

Without treatment, people with HIV infection can develop other severe illnesses:

- Tuberculosis
- Cryptococcal meningitis
- Severe bacterial infections
- Cancers such as Lymphomas and Kaposi's sarcoma
- HIV causes other infections to get worse, such as Hepatitis C, Hepatitis B and Mpox

Diagnosis

Some people may go months or even years without knowing that they are infected, so it is important to get regularly tested for HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. Routine tests will allow those infected with HIV to get necessary treatment and avoid them from unknowingly spreading the disease to others. HIV testing is typically done using simple and affordable, rapid diagnostic tests, as well as self-tests.

- Rapid tests can involve taking a sample of oral fluid or using a finger stick for quick results.
- Lab tests may take a few days to analyze someone's blood sample.

These tests will measure someone's white blood cell count (CD4 cells). The normal range of a CD4 count is from 500 to 1500 cells/mm³ of blood. If the person's CD4 cell count falls below 200, their immunity is severely compromised, leaving them susceptible to infections and possibly death.

HIV testing is usually covered by health insurance, and if you do not have health insurance there are some facilities that offer free, low-cost testing. You can ask your health care provider for available options. Many medical clinics, substance abuse programs, community health centers, and hospitals offer them too.

You can find a testing site near you by:

- using CDC's HIV prevention services locator
- visiting gettested.cdc.gov
- calling 1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)

Treatment

There is no cure that can completely eradicate the virus from someone's body. But treatments like antiretroviral (ART) treatments that are used to prevent or lessen the spread of HIV can also help those who are diagnosed be relieved of the effects of HIV. These ART's suppresses someone's viral load, and once someone's viral load is undetectable, they can no longer spread the disease to others as long as routine treatments are followed.

ART treatments are known in two different variations which are:

- pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) which is given before possible exposure to the virus
- post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) which is given after possible exposure to the virus

A combination of the two can be used for those who are at very high risk of infection. ART is prescribed in at least one or more different oral medications that must be taken daily. Newer long-acting medicines can be given by routine injections for some people. Speak to your primary physician about what treatment plan will work best for you. You can also utilize CDC's HIV prevention services locator to find nearby clinics and community centers who offer ART's.

Resources

["HIV Overview"](#) & [CDC's "About HIV"](#): These two pages include detailed information on where HIV came from, symptoms, and the different stages of HIV infection.

[WHO's "HIV and AIDS Overview"](#): This webpage includes an overview of key facts, different symptoms and treatments, and risk factors relating to HIV.

[AFH's "What is HIV?"](#): This includes details on the transmission of HIV, symptoms, and how HIV may affect women differently.

[AIDSVu Map](#): This is a detailed search map showing data for HIV hotspots all over the US. Data searches can be specified from states to cities, age, race, and many other search options.

[CDC's "HIV Basic Statistics"](#): This webpage provides statistics on people living with HIV in the US based on different racial and ethnic minorities.

[HIV.gov "U.S. Statistics"](#): This contains more statistics on HIV diagnoses in the US along with some resources for prevention and testing.

[Overview of Los Angeles County](#): These are statistics on how HIV affects the many different subpopulations in the L.A. County relating to social and economic factors.

[CDC's "Getting Tested"](#): This page answers questions regarding who should get tested, how often they should get tested, and how to find locations that offer those resources.

[CDC's "HIV Testing"](#): This page includes an HIV test locator, the types of tests available, and how to understand different test results.

[HIV/AIDS Awareness Month](#): This provides some insight on the resulting effects that HIV/AIDS may have on the body, and how that affects the quality of life.

Raspberry Parfaits

[by The Organic Center - Organic Recipes](#)

Serves: 4

Prep Time: 55 minutes.

What you'll need:

- 2 to 3 organic lemons
- 1/4 cup unsalted butter, softened.
- 1 cup plus 1 tbsp granulated sugar, divided.
- 2 large eggs
- 1 cup heavy whipping cream
- 1 tsp pure vanilla extract
- 1 cup fresh organic raspberries



Did You Know?...

Lemons contain a high amount of [vitamin C](#), soluble fiber, and plant compounds that give them a number of health benefits. Lemons may aid weight loss and reduce your risk of heart disease, anemia, kidney stones, digestive issues, and cancer.

How to make:

1. Grate 1 tbsp. lemon zest. Cut the lemons in half and squeeze one-half cup of juice.
2. Beat the butter and 1 cup of sugar at medium speed with an electric mixer until blended. Add eggs, 1 at a time, beating just until blended after each addition. Gradually add lemon juice to the mixture, beating at low speed just until blended. Stir in zest. The mixture will look curdled.
3. Transfer to a heavy, 4-quart saucepan, cook on stove top, whisking constantly over medium-low until mixture thickens and coats back of a spoon, 14-16 minutes.
4. Place a sheet of plastic wrap directly on the warm lemon curd. Chill 4 hours or until firm.
5. To make the whipped cream: Beat the heavy cream at medium speed with an electric mixer until soft peaks begin to form. Gradually blend in the remaining 1 tbsp sugar and the vanilla. Beat until stiff peaks form. Cover and refrigerate.
6. To build the parfaits: In 4 wine or dessert glasses, add a layer of raspberries then a layer of lemon curd and a layer of whipped cream. Continue this layering pattern until glasses are full. Finish with a fresh raspberry layer.
7. Serve immediately or refrigerate up to 4 hours before serving.

The Healthy Fontana team is here to support you and provide resources on how to be a healthier version of yourself. For more information about Healthy Fontana or the programs available to you, visit the **Healthy Fontana website** or call (909) 350-6542.

Upcoming Events**

**** Times/Locations Subject to Change ****
Events may also be cancelled due to inclement weather

Visit Healthy Fontana booth at one (or all) of these upcoming events for FREE resources and giveaways!

- **Saturday, December 2** | **Garden Workshop** | Central City Park Community Garden, 9am
- **Thursdays, December 7, 14, 21, 28** | **Fontana Farmers' Market** | Southridge Park, 2pm-7pm
- **Sundays, December 3, 10, 17** (**12/24, 12/31 Cancelled**) | **Fontana Farmers' Market** | Fontana Park, 10am-3pm



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