

## Resources

Organisations like HIV Ireland are very underfunded. It's a constant struggle to make ends meet, especially with increased demands upon our services. HIV treatment in Ireland is free and of a very high standard. Unfortunately, supports like counselling, education, awareness, and advocacy are severely underfunded. This links with the negative impact of HIV stigma on people's lives.

## Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP)

PrEP is a once daily medication that, in combination with safer-sex practices, has been proven to significantly reduce the risk of sexually acquired HIV infection among uninfected adults at high risk.

As part of HIV prevention, the safety and efficacy of currently approved PrEP medication is well established, and the high level of support for PrEP implementation among key stakeholders and potential end-users points to the need for immediate steps to be taken to make PrEP available freely and widely in Ireland.

## World AIDS Day 2018

World AIDS Day is a global recognition of the impact that HIV has had, and continues to have, on the lives of people living with HIV, and those affected by HIV. It takes place annually on the 1st December. World AIDS Day 2018 is the 30th Anniversary of this important and poignant day.

## What Can Be Done?

- a. Ireland to commit to the international Fast Track Cities project aimed at controlling the HIV epidemic.
- b. Increase resources to maximise opportunities for community and healthcare-based HIV testing across Ireland. Each infection caught can stop another.
- c. Implement HIV Prevention services, including Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) freely available, particularly to at-risk populations.
- d. Increase resources for community-based HIV counselling and support services for people living with HIV in Ireland.
- e. Develop a national awareness campaign promoting the U=U message to combat HIV related stigma and encourage more people to get tested.



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HIV Ireland  
World AIDS Day 2018



# HIV Ireland World Aids Day 2018

## HIV in Ireland

HIV Ireland has been working since 1987 to improve conditions for people living with HIV in Ireland. From the outset, we have been to the forefront of many innovative initiatives aimed at addressing community health and wellbeing needs relative to HIV and AIDS in Ireland. We are involved in providing free targeted community HIV & STI testing, free HIV prevention work, and outreach work that builds relationships and links people into testing, counselling and support. We also provide free condoms, and free resources on HIV and related issues.

Since 2011, there has been an increase of 35% in new HIV diagnoses in Ireland, with a total of 508 people diagnosed as living with HIV in 2016, and 506 in 2017 ([www.hpsc.ie](http://www.hpsc.ie)).

Official figures are likely to understate the scale of the crisis. According to the World Health Organisation 15% of people living with HIV in Europe are undiagnosed.

It is likely the number of people living with HIV in Ireland is considerably higher than the number of diagnosed cases.

In 2018 to date (week 45) there have been 454 new HIV diagnoses in Ireland, 66 more than this time last year.

Ireland now has an average of 10 people per week being diagnosed with HIV.

## HIV Testing

People who don't know their HIV status run the greatest risk of poorer health outcomes, and of transmitting HIV to others through unprotected sex or sharing of needles.

HIV symptoms may not appear for years; therefore, the only way someone will know they are living with HIV is by getting tested.

HIV Ireland provides community testing in Dublin, in Drogheda, and is the Dublin partner in the KnowNow Rapid HIV Testing project, which incorporates testing in Cork, Galway, and Limerick. Both community-based and healthcare-based HIV Testing needs to be expanded and become a normal part of healthcare screening. HIV testing can mean earlier diagnosis and more effective treatment. With early treatment, a person's health prospects can improve, with life expectancy similar to someone not living with HIV.

The UN promoted theme for WAD 2018 is 'Know Your Status' encouraging people to get tested. While HIV Ireland supports this theme, the current availability of HIV testing in Ireland does not meet the demand, or the need.

In 2017, HIV Ireland's testing services catered for 1,082 people. However, we had to turn away a further 384 people because we did not have the resources to provide a service to them.

## Stigma – U=U

If someone is on HIV treatment, and has attained a status where the HIV virus is undetectable within their bodies (virally suppressed), they cannot pass on the virus. There is currently a campaign called U=U (Undetectable = Untransmittable) which aims to spread this message. Apart from acting as an incentive for people to access treatment, it also helps to break down HIV related stigma within society. In 2017, HIV Ireland released the findings of a major HIV stigma survey, the first in Ireland since 2007. The report found that HIV related stigma still persists, and affects the everyday lives of people living with HIV. A majority of people living with HIV fear being judged and treated differently if they disclose their HIV status to others. The stress of HIV related stigma would appear to explain why there is a high level of low self-esteem amongst people living with HIV, and why suicidal thoughts were reported by over 17% of people living with HIV who participated in the survey. Both the main report and the summary report can be viewed on [www.hivireland.ie](http://www.hivireland.ie).\*

\* <http://www.hivireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/Full-Report-HIV-Stigma-2nd-October-2017.pdf>

## Fast-Track to Controlling HIV

The Fast-Track Cities Initiative is a global partnership between the International Association of Providers of AIDS Care (IAPAC), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), in collaboration with local, national, regional, and international partners and stakeholders.

Fast track cities commit to build upon, strengthen, and leverage existing HIV-specific and HIV-related programmes and resources to:

1. Attain 90-90-90 targets
2. Increase utilisation of combination HIV prevention services
3. Reduce to zero the negative impact of stigma and discrimination
4. Establish a common, web-based platform to allow for real-time monitoring of progress

The initiative was launched on World AIDS Day 2014 in Paris, with more than 250 cities internationally having joined this initiative, including London, Paris, San Francisco, Melbourne, San Paolo and New York.

It is time for cities in Ireland, and Ireland as a whole to join other modern global cities and regions by signing up to the Fast-Track Cities Initiative.

