World AIDS Day 2011
Fighting Against HIV/AIDS Should be a Family Affair

This fact sheet created by the National Hispanic Council on Aging (NHCOA)—the leading national organization working to improve the lives of Hispanic older adults, their families, and caregivers—is to help spark dialogue and create awareness regarding World AIDS Day 2011. NHCOA is a proud partner of the CDC’s Act Against AIDS Leadership Initiative (AAALI), an effort to reduce the incidence of HIV/AIDS among diverse communities. For more information, visit www.actagainstaids.org.

What is World AIDS Day?
December 1st marks World AIDS Day, a day for the globe to unite in the fight against HIV/AIDS by learning about it and taking action. World AIDS Day, which started in 1988, is also the first-ever global health day in history.

How Can I Take Action on World AIDS Day?
World AIDS Day is a great opportunity for Hispanic older adults and caregivers to start an open dialogue with their families on HIV/AIDS to dispel myths, eliminate the stigma, and correct misconceptions about this disease.

Why Should HIV/AIDS be a Family Affair?
HIV/AIDS is a faceless, ageless, genderless, and creedless disease – anyone can be infected, at any time. Although we have achieved tremendous breakthroughs in medical treatments and therapies, we can still part a part in protecting our loved ones by leveraging the trust and respect older relatives have with their children and grandchildren.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
What is HIV?
HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus and it causes AIDS. Although there is no cure for HIV, people living with HIV (PLWH) who are under treatment live longer, healthy lives and may never develop AIDS.

What is AIDS?
AIDS stands for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, and is a serious, and often, fatal disease that progresses over a course of 5 to 10 years and leads to death. This occurs among people who are infected with HIV and aren’t under treatment, either because they are unaware of their infection or refuse treatment.

How Is HIV Transmitted?
HIV can be found in certain body fluids, such as blood, semen, vaginal fluids, and breast milk. Therefore, transmission can occur through sexual intercourse, the sharing of needles, pregnancy, childbirth or breastfeeding.
What is the Best Way to Reduce Your Risk of HIV?
The best way to reduce your risk of HIV is to be abstinent or be involved in a monogamous relationship where both partners get tested and know their status, practice safe sex, and avoid sharing needles.

What is the Best Way to Prevent the Spread of HIV?
The best way to prevent the spread of HIV is to get tested. Visit www.hivtest.org or text your five-digit ZIP code to KNOWIT (566948) to find your closest testing location.

MYTHS & REALITIES

Myth: Older adults are immune to HIV.
Reality: Anyone can get infected with HIV at any point in their lives. In fact, almost 25% of the people living with HIV/AIDS are 50 years or older.

Myth: HIV is a contagious disease, like a flu or common cold.
Reality: HIV is not transmitted through saliva, sneezes, or sweat. Casual contact, such as shaking hands, sharing utensils, or kissing, doesn’t transmit the virus either.

Myth: People living with HIV don’t look healthy.
Reality: People living with HIV (PLWH) can look no different from any other person for several years after being infected with the virus, and may continue infecting others until they develop AIDS with deadly complications. On the other hand, PLWH who get treated can have a good quality of life and may never come to develop AIDS.

Myth: Once you are infected with HIV, you will get AIDS right away.
Reality: Those who get tested early, start getting treated upon learning their HIV-positive status, and adhere to the treatment, can potentially live the rest of their lives without developing AIDS.

Myth: There is no point in getting treated for HIV, I will die anyways.
Reality: Breakthroughs in medical treatments, are allowing PLWH who are under treatment to keep the virus (load) count very low and live their lives with HIV as a chronic disease.

QUICK FACTS

- Almost 25% of all people living with HIV/AIDS in the U.S. are ages 50 or older\(^1\), which is up from 17% in 2001.
- Hispanics represent 16% of the US population, but accounted for 20% of new infections in 2009.\(^2\)
- 1 in 36 Hispanic men and one in 106 Latinas will be diagnosed with HIV at some point in their lives.\(^3\)
- Every 9½ minutes, someone in the U.S. is infected with HIV.\(^4\)
- There are 56,300 new HIV infections every year.\(^5\)
- More than one million Americans are living with HIV, but 1 in 5 is unaware of their infection.\(^6\)

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\(^2\) CDC. HIV Among Latinos. [cited; Available from: http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/hispanics/index.htm]

\(^3\) CDC. HIV among Hispanics/Latinos. CDC HIV and Hispanics/Latinos web site 2010 [cited; Available from: http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/hispanics/resources/factsheets/pdf/hispanic.pdf]


\(^5\) Idem.

\(^6\) Idem.