

HIV / AIDS FACT SHEET

1 December 2006

DEFINITIONS ¹

What is HIV?

- HIV stands for the Human Immunodeficiency Virus. HIV attacks the body's immune system - the body's defence against diseases. HIV can still be treated successfully if diagnosed late (although it tends to be more complicated), with drugs that affect the virus's ability to make copies of itself. With treatment, people living with HIV will probably have a normal lifespan, although serious health problems may still occur.

What is AIDS?

- AIDS stands for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. A person is considered to have AIDS when the immune system has become so weak that it can no longer fight off a whole range of diseases with which it would normally cope. If HIV is diagnosed late, treatment may be less effective in preventing AIDS.

THE GLOBAL EPIDEMIC ²

Number of people living with HIV in 2006

- Total 39.5 million
- Adults 37.2 million
- Women 17.7 million
- Children under 15 years 2.3 million

People newly infected with HIV in 2006

- Total 4.3 million
- Adults 3.8 million
- Children under 15 years 530,000

AIDS deaths in 2006

- Total 2.9 million
- Adults 2.6 million
- Children under 15 years 380,000

- AIDS has killed more than 25 million people since it was first recognised in 1981, making it one of the most destructive epidemics in recorded history.
- In 2006 the total number of people living with HIV reached its highest level: nearly 40 million people.
- In the past two years, the number of people living with HIV increased in every region in the world.

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- The most striking increases have occurred in East Asia and in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, where the number of people living with HIV in 2006 was over 21% higher than in 2004. The 270,000 adults and children newly infected with HIV in Eastern Europe and Central Asia in 2006 showed an increase of almost 70% over the 160 000 people who acquired HIV in 2004. In South and South-East Asia, the number of new HIV infections rose by 15% in 2004–2006.
- Sub-Saharan Africa remains hardest-hit, and is home to 24.7 million people living with HIV. A little over 10% of the world's population live in this region, but it is home to 63% of people with HIV. An estimated 2.1 million people died of HIV-related illnesses in this region in 2005, while a further 2.8 million became infected with HIV. However the number of people getting access to treatments has increased, especially in Southern and East Africa.
- HIV/AIDS has a disproportionate effect on women, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. In 2006, 17.7 million women were living with HIV.
- In many regions of the world, new HIV infections are heavily concentrated among young people (15–24 years of age). Among adults 15 years and older, young people accounted for 40% of new HIV infections in 2006.

AUSTRALIAN INCIDENCE RATES ³

- In the year to 31 December 2005 there were:
 - 956 diagnoses of HIV infection
 - 194 diagnoses of AIDS
 - 63 deaths following AIDS were reported by 31 March 2006.
- Up to 31 December 2005, the cumulative number of HIV infections in Australia was estimated at 25,243, and the cumulative number of AIDS diagnoses was 9,759.
- 6,594 deaths following AIDS were reported by December 31 2005. An estimated 16,000 people were living with HIV/AIDS in Australia in 2005.
- An estimated 53% of all people living with HIV infection were treated with antiretroviral therapy in 2004 (figures not available for 2005).
- Transmission in Australia continues to be mainly through sexual contact between men. 86% of all new HIV transmissions in Australia in 2000 - 2005 were estimated to have been via such contact.

¹ National AIDS Trust, UK

² UNAIDS. Dec 2006 report on the global AIDS epidemic: UNAIDS. World Health Organisation.

³ National Centre in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research (NCHECR), Australian Surveillance Update April 2006 and Annual Surveillance Report 2005.