

AIDS : a worldwide effort will stop it / World Health Organization Special Programme on AIDS.

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AIDS

A worldwide effort will stop it.

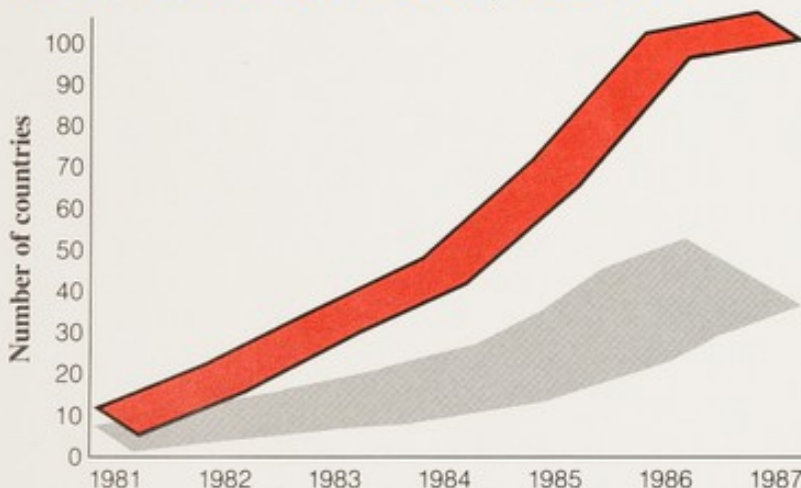


World Health Organization
Special Programme on AIDS

Today we face a worldwide epidemic of a disease that has no near-term medical solution. One that takes an unprecedented social and economic toll on individuals, families, communities, even whole countries. A disease that thrives not just in the body, but on human ignorance, fear, and resistance to change. The disease is Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS).

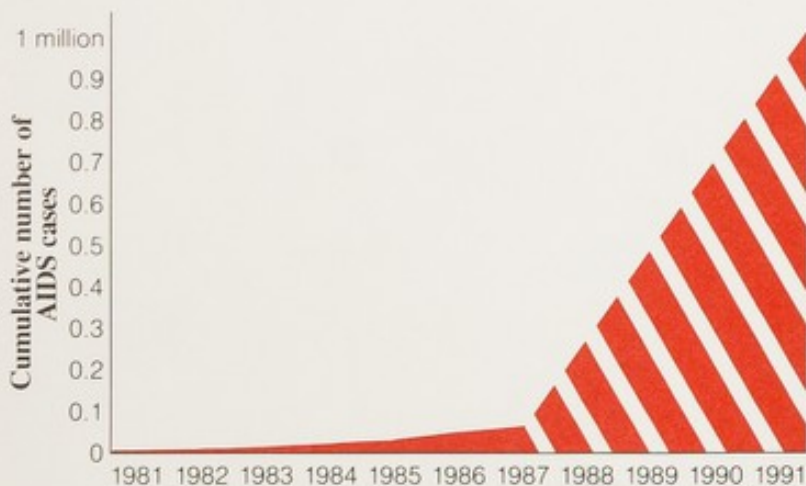
AIDS. A worldwide effort will stop it.

Number of countries reporting one or more cases of AIDS, 1981-1987.



AIDS cases worldwide, 1981-1991.

(Estimated)



AIDS. It threatens all countries.

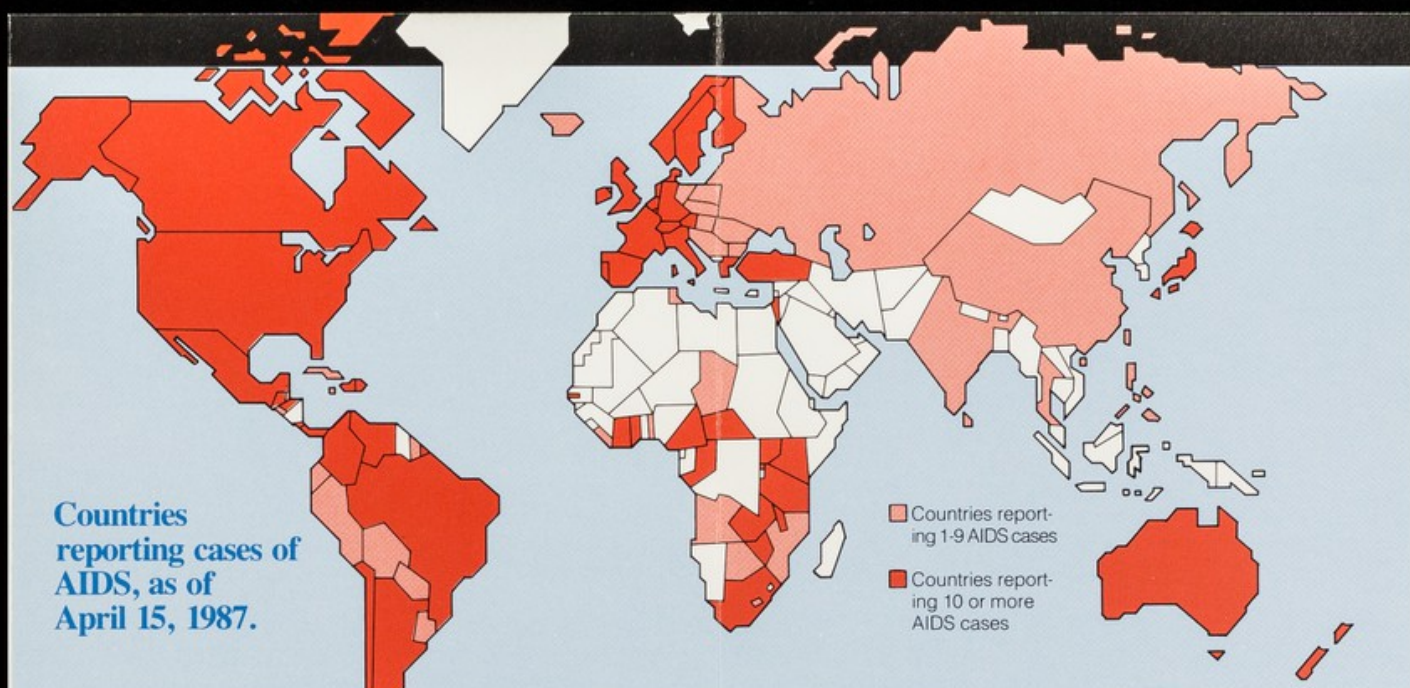
AIDS was first identified in 1981. Since then, the number of countries reporting cases of AIDS has risen dramatically, from 8 in 1981 to more than 100 in early 1987. AIDS is now a worldwide epidemic—and a worldwide threat demands a global response. The World Health Organization is leading the global fight against AIDS.

The size of this epidemic has been largely underestimated. One reason is that cases of AIDS are only the *visible* signs of a much more widespread infection.

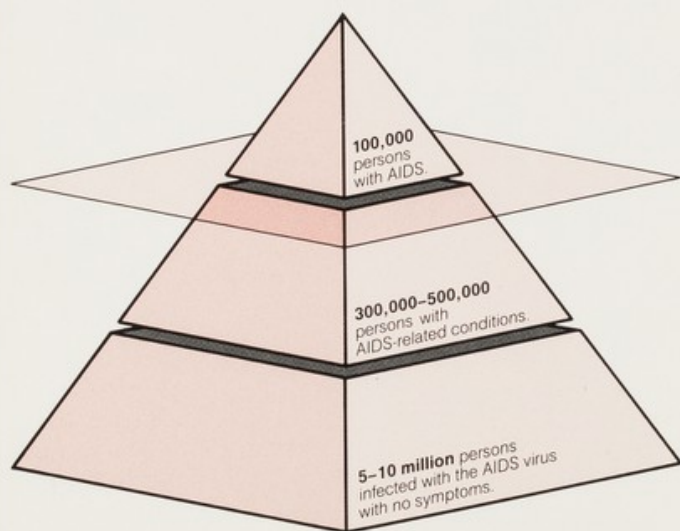
- AIDS symptoms may not develop for five or more years after an individual is infected with the AIDS virus. People with AIDS today became infected with the AIDS virus up to five years ago—or even before. The number of AIDS cases today does not tell us how many people will have AIDS in the next few years. Thus the

number of AIDS cases so far is much smaller than the true number of people infected with the AIDS virus.

- We do not yet know whether every person infected with the AIDS virus will develop AIDS or AIDS-related conditions. Since we have known about AIDS, about 10 to 30 percent of people infected with the virus have developed AIDS; another 20 to 50 percent have developed AIDS-related conditions.
- The World Health Organization estimates that five to 10 million people are now infected with the AIDS virus . . . and most do not know it. If past experience holds, between 500,000 and three million of these people will have AIDS by the early 1990s, resulting in 10 to 20 times more AIDS cases in the next five years than there have been in the last five years.



AIDS. The hidden epidemic.



AIDS. It robs us of the future.

The worldwide AIDS epidemic threatens progress in public health. When the AIDS virus infects pregnant women, infant mortality rises. In some areas, an alarming percentage of children are being born with AIDS. The interaction of the AIDS virus with other diseases sparks outbreaks of otherwise controllable infections. And, throughout the world, care of AIDS patients places enormous burdens on already limited health resources.

AIDS also threatens economic and social development. By mainly striking adults 20-49 years old, it

robs countries of men and women in their prime working years. Fear and ignorance of AIDS break down vital social relationships between communities, families, and individuals and even lead to political problems in and between countries.

The AIDS epidemic affects both industrialized and developing countries. And the stresses it puts on the economic and social fabric of every country are severe and long-lasting.

The implications are clear:
AIDS must be stopped worldwide.

AIDS. We know how it starts.

AIDS begins with a virus, a microscopic infectious agent. The AIDS virus is not like the viruses we usually talk about. The AIDS virus invades and destroys the cells in the body that are responsible for defending the body against disease. This leads to severe weakening of the body's natural defense system. Because of this action on the immune

system, the AIDS virus is called the Human Immunodeficiency Virus, or HIV.

AIDS is the name given to the last stage of an infection with this virus, when the breakdown in the immune system leaves the body vulnerable to life-threatening infections and cancers. It is these diseases that result in death.

AIDS. We know why it is so dangerous.

Three features of infection with the AIDS virus are critical:

- Infection with the virus is life-long. Once a person is infected, the AIDS virus remains in the body, and the risk of developing AIDS or other health problems increases the longer one has been infected with the virus.
- There is no known drug that rids the body of the virus. A vaccine to protect against the AIDS virus and suitable for widespread use will probably not be available for five to 10 years.
- A person infected with the AIDS virus may have no symptoms for years yet can still spread the virus to someone else. Thus the infection can spread silently through a population from people infected with the virus.

AIDS. We know how it spreads.

The AIDS virus spreads through blood, semen, and vaginal fluids. It is transmitted in three ways:

- Through sexual activity. This is the most frequent means of transmission. The virus can be transmitted from any infected person to his or her sexual partner (man to woman, woman to man, and from man to man).
- Through blood. The main ways a person can be infected through blood are by receiving blood transfusions (or blood products) infected with the AIDS virus or by using

blood-contaminated needles or other skin-piercing equipment.

- From infected mother to child during pregnancy, at birth, or shortly after birth.

It is *not* spread through:

- Casual contact, such as at work or at school
- Touching or hugging
- Handshakes
- Coughing or sneezing
- Insects
- Water or food
- Cups, glasses, plates
- Toilets
- Swimming pools or public baths

Prevent the spread of sexually acquired AIDS.

People not at risk of sexually acquired AIDS:

- People who abstain from sex
- People who are not infected and who only have sexual intercourse with a faithful, uninfected partner

To help prevent the spread of sexually acquired AIDS, others should:

- Reduce the number of their sexual partners
- Avoid sex with people who have many partners themselves, such as prostitutes
- Avoid sexual penetration—vaginal, oral, anal
- Always use a condom—every time, from start to finish

AIDS. Individual actions can stop it.

The spread of AIDS can be stopped, even though a vaccine is not yet available. People must be informed and educated about how their own actions can stop AIDS.

Sexual intercourse is the most frequent means of transmitting the AIDS virus. To prevent sexually acquired infection, people must take very specific steps.

First, some people are not in danger of becoming infected with the AIDS virus through sex:

- People who abstain from sex
- People who are not infected and who only have sexual intercourse with a faithful, uninfected partner

Others should:

- Reduce the number of their sexual partners (the more partners, the greater the risk)
- Avoid sex with people who have many sexual partners themselves, such as prostitutes
- Avoid sexual penetration—vaginal, oral, anal
- Always use a condom—every time, from start to finish

In many places, before blood is used for a transfusion, it is tested for AIDS virus contamination. This testing protects a person receiving a blood transfusion from becoming infected with the AIDS virus. However, where blood donors may be infected and blood is not tested, the AIDS virus infection can be spread to the person receiving a blood transfusion.

Needles, syringes, and instruments that pierce the skin (like tattoo and acupuncture needles and ear-piercing equipment) must always be sterile. All injections, and any other cutting or piercing of the skin, must be done only with equipment that is sterile and used only once or sterilized between each use.

Do not use intravenous drugs. But if you must, protect yourself from AIDS by never sharing your equipment.

Women infected with the AIDS virus should consider avoiding pregnancy. Pregnancy may be dangerous to the mother, and the baby has about a one-in-two chance of getting the AIDS virus from the mother.

The implications for every individual are very clear:

Learn about AIDS. Protect yourself against infection and thereby contribute your part to stopping the AIDS epidemic.

AIDS. Now is the time for action.

AIDS knows no geographic, social, racial, or cultural boundaries.

The World Health Organization is leading the worldwide fight against AIDS. Its global strategy is to stop the spread of AIDS by:

- attacking AIDS in *every* country;
- striking *every* way the virus spreads;
- using *every* scientific and educational tool.

This strategy to stop AIDS requires vigorous action at the national and international level.

At the *national* level, each country needs a complete AIDS prevention and control programme. As part of the national primary health care system, the AIDS programme:

- Protects by informing and educating people about AIDS and how to avoid becoming infected with the AIDS virus or infecting others.
- Ensures that blood transfusions and injections are safe.

- Helps those people who are already infected with the AIDS virus.

In the past, the World Health Organization led the effort that eradicated smallpox; today it is leading the global fight against AIDS. The World Health Organization is calling upon all countries to support and cooperate with one another against the common threat of AIDS.

The World Health Organization—with headquarters in Geneva; regional offices in Brazzaville (Congo), Washington, D.C. (USA), Alexandria (Egypt), Copenhagen (Denmark), New Delhi (India), and Manila (Philippines); and national offices in about 100 countries—is committed to *global* AIDS prevention and control. The success of the global strategy will depend on individuals and nations working together for this common goal.

If you would like more information about AIDS, contact your healthcare provider or your local, district, provincial, or national health ministry or department.

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