

# National HIV/AIDS and Aging Awareness Day – Spreading Knowledge and Ending Stigma

Posted by [Naomi Hurley](#) On 09/15/2017

**Hollywood, MD**—Commemorating its ninth year since inception, Sept. 18 is National HIV/AIDS and Aging Awareness Day (NHAAD). Started by The AIDS Institute back in 2008, NHAAD aims to shed light on a facet of the AIDS community often overlooked—the seniors living with this virus.

There are an estimated 1.1 million people in the United States living with HIV. A surprising 26% of those are 55 years and older, meaning that approximately 286,000 seniors in our country have HIV. NHAAD was originally enacted because older people are less likely to be tested for HIV, and the number of senior citizens testing positive is only increasing. Often, older adults are not tested for HIV for a lengthy period after they have contracted the infection, making it more difficult to treat. Many seniors also face diabetes and heart disease, which only further debilitate treatment.

There are several reasons as to why seniors are not as well-informed on the risks of contracting HIV. While most of those with HIV are younger than 55, almost 300,000 people is still a staggering number of adults. However, because the majority are younger, older adults may not even consider contracting HIV a possibility when having unprotected sex, or sharing needles. Unfortunately, many seniors have the potential to be newly single, and therefore have entered the dating world again. Without the fear of getting pregnant, these seniors may not be using contraceptives when engaging in intercourse. With sex education in our schools only advancing more recently, some of these adults may not have the proper knowledge on practicing safe sex. Marketing campaigns for HIV/AIDS awareness are also usually targeted at younger audiences.

Another unfortunate situation that occurs with these older adults getting HIV is the negative stigma associated with the infection. While contracting HIV is undoubtedly an awful event to happen to someone, what many may not think about is the fact that simply one action can lead to someone getting infected. Just one instance of unprotected sex with a person with HIV can lead to infection, and to err is human. Rather than being or feeling shamed, people of all ages need to stay proactive and optimistic with their treatment.

It is vital for us as a society to be more understanding of HIV/AIDS, and to end the stigma surrounding this virus. Brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers, and even grandparents test positive for HIV in the United States. NHAAD aims to spread the word, and encourage mindful thinking not just from those that have HIV, but for families and friends, and even those that do not know anyone with this ailment. For more information on NHAAD, visit their [website](#). For more information concerning HIV/AIDS, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/>. For information on where to find testing facilities, go to <https://gettested.cdc.gov/>. To end the stigma, we must understand. To understand, we must be aware. Awareness allows us to make smart and safe choices, and to help stop the spread of HIV.

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