

# World AIDS Day

## Healthcare Insight

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**S I M E K A**  
HEALTH

member of  **Sanlam** group

# World AIDS Day is commemorated each year on the 1st of December and is an opportunity for every community to unite in the fight against HIV, show support for people living with HIV and remember those who lost the battle.

## Do your bit

### Maintaining HIV status

In South Africa, data shows that many treatment programmes face difficulty retaining people in HIV care.

Maintaining one's HIV status through routine HIV testing is regarded as an important step in establishing a comprehensive package of HIV and AIDS prevention and treatment. Counselling and testing provide individuals with vital information regarding their HIV status, which increases access to treatment, as well as prevents new infections.

The Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) South Africa, together with its partners, ensures that counselling and testing activities comply with and complement government policies and activities.

Men, youth, rural residents, migrant workers, offenders, couples, and sex workers are some of the hard-to-reach populations. The U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) reach these populations using a variety of approaches, including home-based counselling and testing, stand-alone and mobile testing centres situated in locations such as malls and taxi ranks. <sup>1</sup>The South African Ministry of Health welcomed a R10 billion funding approval by PEPFAR towards South Africa's HIV programme in 2019.

1) <https://za.usembassy.gov/government-welcomes-pepfar-hiv-funding-commitment/>

### Testing regularly

Having sexual relations, even if you always use protection, may require you to test for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) every year. In some cases, you may want to test more regularly.

It is recommended that more frequent testing should take place for groups who are more at risk, for example, if you have a new partner or a same sex partner and are sexually active. Regular testing is also advisable if you had unprotected sex, have recently been diagnosed with another STI, shared needles or injecting equipment, or are worried and would like to put your mind at ease.

Testing regularly helps keep your mind at rest, and if you test positive, it means you can start treatment quickly, protecting your health and the ones who are closely involved in a relationship with you. You can also contact the National AIDS helpline on 0800 012 322 or email them at [aidshelpline.org.za](mailto:aidshelpline.org.za).

It is possible that HIV-related illness will develop within 5–10 years for people who are not diagnosed, or not taking antiretroviral therapy. Usually, HIV transmission and AIDS diagnosis are separated by 10-15 years, but this can vary. Testing for HIV is the only way to know if a person has HIV or not. If you suspect that you might have HIV, visit your doctor, local clinic or any public health facility.

## 2021 World AIDS Day theme

The theme of World AIDS Day 2021 is “End inequalities. End AIDS”.

The WHO and its partners are emphasizing the growing inequalities in access to essential HIV services, with a special focus on the people left behind.



World-wide, millions of people are affected by HIV, which remains a major public health problem. **Despite significant progress over the past decade, key global targets for 2020 were not met according to WHO.**

## 2020 Statistics



37,700,000

estimated number of people living with HIV in 2020



680,000

people died from HIV-related causes in 2020



1,500,000

people were newly infected in 2020



73%

of adults living with HIV received lifelong antiretroviral therapy in 2020

You can **“Join the campaign”** by downloading and sharing various social media tiles, banners and screensavers and help create awareness to confront the inequalities that drive HIV/AIDS.

Source:  
<https://www.aidshealth.org/global/south-africa/>  
<https://www.cdc.gov/globalhealth/countries/southafrica/what/counselingtesting.htm>  
<https://www.avert.org/hiv-testing/when-get-tested-hiv>  
<https://www.who.int/campaigns/world-aids-day/world-aids-day-2021>

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