

PRESS STATEMENT

Why the world needs an HIV vaccine

GENEVA, 18 May 2017—On the 20th HIV Vaccine Awareness Day, UNAIDS is calling for continued research to find a vaccine for HIV. Although there have been significant discoveries in the field of vaccine research and development, there is still no effective vaccine available against HIV.

New HIV infections have remained stubbornly high for the past 10 years. Every year, 1.9 million adults and more than 150 000 children become infected with the virus. Even if a 90% reduction in new HIV infections is achieved by 2030, there will still be around 200 000 new HIV infections annually, demonstrating how essential a vaccine will be for the long-term control of HIV.

“Despite our major successes in scaling up treatment and ongoing prevention programmes, there are still large numbers of people becoming infected with HIV every year,” said Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of UNAIDS. “The biggest impacts in the eradication or control of infectious diseases in the history of public health have been achieved through vaccination, which is why a vaccine is an objective well worth continuing to invest in.”

Successful antiretroviral therapy requires lifelong adherence, but adherence relies on behaviour change, which can be difficult to maintain. In contrast, an HIV vaccine is a one-time intervention that is extremely cost-effective compared with the cost of lifelong treatment.

A simple-to-use vaccine would be a key tool in reaching the populations most affected by HIV. Models estimate that even a modestly effective vaccine—one that is 50% effective—would have a big impact on the epidemic and may be enough to significantly reduce new HIV infections among key populations.

Industry is helping to take on the challenge of vaccine development. Vaccine candidates are in company pipelines, with some trials starting soon and others during the next few years.

A large vaccine trial, HVTN 702, is in progress in South Africa, with results due in three years. That trial, part of the HIV Vaccine Trials Network, builds on the RV144 trial, which reported in 2009 and was conducted in Thailand, showing a 31% efficacy.

This year, UNAIDS is hosting an art installation on the power of vaccines, reflecting the importance of linking art, advocacy and science. The exhibition, entitled Immune Nations, opens on 23 May and runs until 30 June 2017.

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UNAIDS

The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) leads and inspires the world to achieve its shared vision of zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths. UNAIDS unites the efforts of 11 UN organizations—UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, UN Women, ILO, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank—and works closely with global and national partners towards ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030 as part of the Sustainable Development Goals. Learn more at [unaids.org](https://www.unaids.org) and connect with us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.