

Press release: New HIV diagnoses across the UK fell by 17 per cent in 2017

Data published today by Public Health England (PHE) reveal that new HIV diagnoses in the UK have fallen for the second year in a row. New diagnoses decreased by 17% in 2017 – from 4,363 new diagnoses reported compared to 5,280 in 2016, which brought new cases down to their lowest level since 2000.

This decrease continues a downward trend that started in 2015, with an overall 28% reduction in new HIV diagnoses between 2015 and 2017. The reduction was largely driven by a decline in new HIV diagnoses among gay and bisexual men, which fell by 17% compared to 2016 and by 31% compared to 2015. This decrease was due to the high uptake of HIV testing in this group, particularly repeat HIV testing among higher risk men. Increased uptake of anti-retroviral therapy (ART) – drugs that keep the level of HIV in the body low and help prevent it being passed on – also significantly contributed to the decline in new diagnoses.

New HIV diagnoses in black African and Caribbean heterosexuals have been steadily decreasing over the past 10 years. For the first time, a UK-wide fall was also seen in new diagnoses in heterosexuals from other ethnicities, with a drop of 20% in 2017 when previously they had remained stable at around 1000 per year.

Professor Noel Gill, Head of the STI and HIV Department at Public Health England, said:

We are pleased to see that UK prevention efforts are having a significant impact on new HIV diagnoses, and this heralds the lowest number of HIV diagnoses in the UK since 2000. However, we know that anyone who has sex with a casual partner without a condom or shares needles may be at risk of infection.

The most common way of getting HIV in the UK is through having sex without a condom – so consistent and correct condom use with new and casual partners stops you getting or transmitting HIV and other STIs. If you think you have been exposed to HIV it is easy to get tested so, if positive, you can start treatment as soon as possible.

Steve Brine, Public Health Minister said:

HIV is a devastating and life-altering disease. Today's figures mean we are well on our way to eradicating it once and for all but we have not an ounce of complacency.

Our commitment to prevention has led to more people getting tested and almost every person with a diagnosis is now in treatment – meaning they are unlikely to pass the virus on to someone else. I am committed to ensuring that we deliver on our promise to reduce the number of people contracting HIV even further.

There are very effective treatments for HIV that enable people diagnosed with the virus to live a long and healthy life, and minimise the risk of onward transmission. Early diagnosis through regular testing ensures people get the greatest benefit from these HIV treatments. HIV testing is freely available through GP surgeries, local hospitals and sexual health clinics, as well as through a self-sampling service or by using a home-testing kit.

Public Health England, alongside other government and third sector organisations, is working to control HIV by 2030 and these new figures are an encouraging sign that this is achievable.

Background

1. Epidemiological data on new HIV diagnoses and people receiving HIV care can be found in the [PHE health protection report and annual HIV data tables](#). Regional and Local Authority data on new HIV diagnosis rates, late diagnoses and diagnosed HIV prevalence data can be analysed on the [PHE Sexual Health Profiles](#).
2. The data shows that:
 - In 2017, 4,363 people were newly diagnosed with HIV in the UK, a reduction by 17% compared to the 5,280 diagnoses reported in 2016.
 - There were 2,330 new HIV diagnoses among gay and bisexual men reported in 2017, a 17% reduction from the 2,820 diagnoses in 2016 and 28% reduction from the 3,390 diagnoses in 2015.
 - There were 594 new HIV diagnoses among black African and Caribbean heterosexuals in 2017, a reduction of 23% compared to the 775 diagnoses in 2016.
 - Overall, 42% of people were diagnosed at a late stage of infection (CD4 count <350 cells/mm³ at diagnosis) in 2017. Late diagnosis is associated with a ten-fold increased risk of short term mortality (within a year of diagnosis).
 - In 2017, there were 230 people with an AIDS-defining illness reported at HIV diagnosis (5.3%) and 428 deaths among people with HIV.
 - In 2017, 93,385 people were receiving HIV-related care in the UK, with 98% (91,266/93,385) receiving anti-retroviral therapy to control the virus. Of those receiving anti-retroviral therapy in 2017, 97% (88,528/91,266) had untransmissible levels of virus.
3. HIV is a virus which damages the cells in people's immune system and weakens their ability to fight everyday infections and diseases. Without treatment, after an average of 10 to 15 years, the infection is fatal.
4. PHE advises gay and bisexual men to have an HIV test at least once a year, or every 3 months if they're having unprotected sex with new or casual partners. Black African men and women are advised to have a regular HIV and STI screen, if they're having unprotected sex with new

or casual partners.

5. You can find out more information about how to prevent and get tested for HIV on [NHS Choices](#). The HIV home sampling service offers an alternative to traditional testing offered by GPs and sexual health clinic. Visit www.FreeTesting.hiv to find out more about free HIV home-sampling test kits.
6. It is too early to know the size of the expected additional effect on underlying HIV transmission and new HIV diagnoses of the scale-up of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP). PHE is supporting NHS England in delivering the 3-year [PrEP Impact Trial](#), which began in October 2017.