World Aids Day 2015: What Will You Do?

Every year on 1 December, people across the globe mark World AIDS Day. This international day is to remember those who have died from AIDS-related illnesses, to prevent new cases of HIV, the virus that leads to AIDS, and to stand in solidarity with people living with the HIV virus.

This year, the campaign in Scotland is focusing on asking people “What will you do?” to:

- prevent new cases of HIV;
- challenge the stigma and prejudice people with HIV still face; and
- remember those who’ve died as a result of an AIDS related illness?

HIV can be passed on if the body fluid of a person who has HIV enters the bloodstream of someone who does not have HIV. HIV is most commonly transmitted through unprotected sex. Unprotected anal or vaginal sex without a condom increases the risk of passing on the infection if one of the partners has HIV.

Sharing injecting or snorting equipment for drug use is also a high risk activity for transmission of HIV and other blood borne viruses, including hepatitis C and hepatitis B.

HIV is not passed on through everyday social contact with an infected person such as touching, shaking hands, kissing, coughing or sneezing.
Dr Carol Davidson, Director of Public Health, NHS Ayrshire & Arran, said: “Many people who have HIV don’t know it, so getting tested is important. Practising safer sex by using condoms or dams, never sharing needles or other drug injecting equipment, and getting tested regularly if you think you may have been at risk, all play an important part in preventing HIV. “

It is estimated that around 5,000 people are currently living with HIV in Scotland. Currently, no vaccine or cure for HIV is available. Once a person contracts HIV, they will remain infected with the virus for life. HIV can however, be treated effectively using a combination of medicines to fight HIV infection. Treatment isn’t a cure, but it can control the virus so people can live a longer, healthier life and reduce the risk of transmitting HIV to others.

If you understand how HIV is transmitted, how it can be prevented, and the reality of living with HIV today, you can use this knowledge to take care of your own health and the health of others, and ensure you treat everyone living with HIV fairly, and with respect and understanding.

Dr Davidson added: “The only way of knowing if you have HIV is by taking an HIV test. Tests are free, reliable, quick and confidential. You should take an HIV test if you feel you have been at risk.

“If you have a new sexual partner, both of you should consider a sexual health check up, to make sure you are not putting each other at risk of HIV or any other sexually transmitted infections. You can’t tell by looking at someone whether they have HIV or not. If you’re having sex with a new partner or with someone whose HIV status you don’t know, always protect yourself by using a condom or dam.”

For more information on HIV including where to access testing, please visit [www.shayr.com/hiv-facts/what-is-hiv-aids/](http://www.shayr.com/hiv-facts/what-is-hiv-aids/)
You can show your support for World Aids Day by:

- adding a ribbon to your online profile at [http://twibbon.com/support/aids-day-whatwillyoudo](http://twibbon.com/support/aids-day-whatwillyoudo);
- posting what you will be doing or a selfie with your red ribbon using #WhatWillYouDo or #AIDSdayScot;
- following @AIDSdayScot on Twitter or [www.facebook.comAIDSdayScot](http://www.facebook.comAIDSdayScot) on Facebook; and
- attending or hosting events within your organisation to promote World Aids Day.


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For immediate use

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