

# HIV VACCINE RESEARCH FACT SHEET

## About HIV Vaccines

A vaccine to prevent HIV does not currently exist, but scientists are trying to develop one. Most experts think that an HIV vaccine would be the most effective way to prevent new HIV infections. Many vaccine studies are being done in the United States and all over the world.

## What is a vaccine?

A vaccine is something that teaches the body's immune system to recognize and defend itself against a virus or a disease (such as HIV). Usually, vaccines are given as an injection from your doctor or nurse.

## Why do we need a preventative HIV vaccine?

There still is no cure for AIDS and almost 7,400 people are infected with HIV every day worldwide (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2009). While we do have effective treatments for HIV, treatment can be complicated, expensive, and can cause serious side effects. A preventative HIV vaccine may be the best hope for ending the AIDS epidemic and stopping new HIV infections.

## What is happening in HIV vaccine research?

Since 1987, thousands of people have volunteered for hundreds of HIV vaccine studies. These studies are being done by the US government, universities, and by private drug companies. Scientists believe that an effective HIV vaccine is possible and are working to speed up the research process.

## Can you get HIV if you volunteer for an HIV vaccine study?

**NO. It is impossible for study volunteers to get HIV from the study vaccines.** The study vaccines are NOT made from actual virus. Other kinds of vaccines (flu, smallpox) use weak versions of their virus to make the vaccine. HIV vaccines do not.

## Could a study vaccine make someone test HIV-positive?

Some study vaccines can make your body create antibodies against HIV. These antibodies could be found with some HIV tests. **This does NOT mean that you are infected with HIV.** HIV vaccine study centers do special tests to prove that a person is not actually infected. Also, this "false positive" HIV test result may go away over time.

## Who can volunteer for an HIV vaccine study?

HIV negative men and women over the age of 18 are able to volunteer for HIV vaccine studies. Different studies have different requirements. Some studies need volunteers who are at high risk of HIV infection; others need volunteers who are at low or no risk for HIV. All studies need volunteers from different population groups.

## How can I get involved in the HIV vaccine cause?

- Tell members of your community that you support HIV vaccine research and that the world needs an HIV vaccine. Also tell them that HIV vaccines do not contain HIV and will not infect anyone with the virus!
- Volunteer for a vaccine study.
- Join a vaccine study Community Advisory Board.
- Attend a National HIV Vaccine Awareness Day event scheduled each year on May 18.

## Where can I get more information about HIV vaccines?

The following websites are excellent resources for HIV vaccine research information:

Be The Generation: [www.bethegeneration.nih.gov](http://www.bethegeneration.nih.gov)

The International HIV Vaccine Advocacy Initiative:

[www.iavi.org](http://www.iavi.org)

The AIDS Vaccine Advocacy Coalition: [www.avac.org](http://www.avac.org)

The HIV Vaccine Trials Network: [www.hvtn.org](http://www.hvtn.org)

Hope Takes Action: [www.hopetakesaction.org](http://www.hopetakesaction.org)

AIDS Research Alliance (for HIV vaccine studies in Los Angeles): [www.aidsresearch.org](http://www.aidsresearch.org)

**If delivery of HIV Vaccine services has not been offered appropriately, please contact OAPP's warmline @ (800) 260-8787.**