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Stand in Solidarity ? Fight the Pandemic

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December 1st marks **World AIDS Day**, a day observed to raise awareness around



the AIDS pandemic, and to focus a globalized effort on HIV/AIDS prevention and education. World AIDS Day was conceived during the Global Programme on AIDS hosted by the World Health Organization in 1987. It is currently planned and promoted by the [Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS](#) ^[1]. Since 1987, over **25 million people have died of AIDS** ^[1] ^[2] and there are an estimated **33 million people currently living with HIV** ^[2] ^[2]. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), over **61,000 young people were estimated to be living with HIV in the U.S.** in 2007 ^[3] ^[3].

AIDS stands for **Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome**, and it is the disease that is caused by **Human Immunodeficiency Virus** (HIV). HIV can be acquired through several different ways, though most commonly it is transmitted through unprotected sexual contact or sharing needles. HIV is only carried through four different bodily fluids: pre-semen/semen, vaginal fluid, blood and breast milk. HIV/AIDS itself does not cause illness, but suppresses the immune system by attacking CD4 cells that are responsible for maintaining immune system response allowing for opportunistic infections to take hold in the body. In the United States, a person is considered to have AIDS when there are less than 200 CD4 cells per microliter of blood. Thanks to new treatments, it now typically takes much longer for HIV to cause AIDS.

Things you can do??

1. **Get tested!** The best way to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS is to know if you have it. **To find an HIV testing site near you, visit www.hivtest.org** ^[4] **or text your ZIP code to KNOWIT (566948)**

. You also can call the CDC hotline at 1-800-232-4636 for assistance in locating a testing site.??

2. **Host a film screening!** [We Were Here](#) [5] is a film about the early stages of the AIDS epidemic in San Francisco, and the activism that surrounded it. The film is not rated.?
3. **Have an Informational Table!** Tell your GSA and school about World AIDS Day and how they can help. Make sure to have a list of local clinics where testing is offered. **Knowing the information about HIV/AIDS is half of the battle!??**
4. **Volunteer!** There are dozens of organizations around the country and world dedicated to HIV/AIDS prevention and education, as well as helping people who have HIV/AIDS. **Visit these sites to find places to volunteer in your area:?**
[volunteermatch.org](#) [6]
[idealist.org?](#) [7]
5. **Wear a red ribbon** as a symbol of your solidarity with people living with HIV/AIDS.

??To learn more about World AIDS Day, visit: [worldaidsday.org](#) [8]

??To learn more about HIV/AIDS visit:?

- Scarleteen: [scarleteen.com](#) [9]
- Teen Source: [teensource.org](#) [10]
- Sex, Etc.: [sexetc.org/topic/lgbtq](#) [11]
- Stop. Think. Be Safe: [stopthinkbesafe.org/YoungPeople](#) [12]
- Advocates for Youth: [advocatesforyouth.org](#) [13]

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Links

- [1] <http://www.unaids.org/en/>
- [2] http://www.unaids.org/globalreport/Global_report.htm
- [3] <http://www.kff.org/womenshealth/upload/3040-05.pdf>
- [4] <http://www.hivtest.org>
- [5] <http://wewereherefilm.com/>
- [6] <http://www.volunteermatch.org>
- [7] <http://www.idealists.org/>
- [8] <http://www.worldaidsday.org/>
- [9] <http://www.scarleteen.com/>
- [10] <http://www.teensource.org/ts/>
- [11] <http://www.sexetc.org/topic/lgbtq>
- [12] <http://www.stopthinkbesafe.org/youngPeople/index.asp>
- [13] <http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/>