

## **HIV Prevention among Men Who Have Sex with Men: Impact of HIV among MSM**

(from a CDC Satellite Broadcast on May 17, 2007)

**[Announcer]** *This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC, safer, healthier people.*

**[Announcer]** After the airing of this Satellite Broadcast in May 2007, CDC issued a revised 2005 HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report (June 2007). Some of the data cited in this broadcast have been updated. The revised report can be found at [www.cdc.gov/HIV/datarevision.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/HIV/datarevision.htm).

**[Moderator/Dr. Rob Janssen]** Now, throughout today's program, when we refer to "Men Who Have Sex With Men," or MSM, we mean all men who have sex with other men, regardless of how they identify themselves – whether as gay, as bisexual or as heterosexual. From the earliest days of AIDS in the United States, Men Who Have Sex With Men have been at the center of the epidemic. They have been the risk group that's been most affected by far, and they were the first to respond in the fight against HIV and AIDS. The data on HIV/AIDS cases among MSM are staggering. Our most recent information, compiled from 2005 data from the 33 areas with confidential name-based HIV reporting, indicates that, in the United States, MSM account for 72% of all estimated HIV infections among male adults and adolescents, even though only about 5% to 7% of men in the United States report being MSM. In 2005, MSM accounted for 53% of all people in these areas who received an HIV/AIDS diagnosis. Estimates are that more than 233,000 MSM are living with HIV or AIDS in the United States. Although the number of HIV diagnosis for MSM decreased during the 1980s and 1990s, recent data show an increase in HIV among MSM. For example, the number of HIV/AIDS diagnosis among MSM increased approximately 13% from 2003 to 2005. The cases of HIV/AIDS among Black MSM, Latino MSM, and Native American MSM are especially high. And young MSM are particularly at high risk of contracting HIV. As I'm sure you already know, a recent CDC study, conducted in five large U.S. cities, found that HIV prevalence among Black MSM was 46%, which was more than twice that among white MSM at 21%. MSM are members of all communities across the United States, all races, all ethnicities.

Social and economic factors, including racism, homophobia, poverty, lack of access to health care, they are significant barriers to receiving HIV prevention services, particularly for MSM of minority races and ethnicities. The stigma associated with homosexuality may have negative effects on the health and well-being of MSM and impede HIV prevention. Sexual risk factors, including unprotected sex and sexually transmitted diseases, or STDs, account for most HIV infections among MSM. STDs, which increase the risk for HIV infection, have been increasing in recent years and remain a critically important health issue for MSM. Approximately 25% of people in the United States who are infected with HIV don't know that they are infected. However, among MSM, CDC data indicates that of the 25% of MSM who are infected with HIV, overall 48% are unaware that they have HIV. In some subgroups this percentage may be even higher. And in a CDC study of young MSM, 77% of those who tested HIV

positive had assumed that they were not infected. The use of alcohol and drugs continues to be prevalent among some MSM and is linked to risk factors for HIV infection and other STDs. And reports of increased use of methamphetamine by some MSM, which is highly addictive and linked to sexual risk behavior and injection drug use, have raised public health concerns. More than 25 years into the HIV epidemic, we see complacency among some MSM regarding their personal risk of HIV infection. The success of highly active anti-retroviral therapy may be contributing to some complacency among MSM, especially younger men, who have not seen first hand the heavy toll that HIV has taken over the years, especially at the beginning of the epidemic. And the internet involves new avenues of risk and challenge, but at the same time, also provides incredible potential as a powerful tool for HIV prevention. These data do not mean that MSM are no longer concerned about HIV. The majority of men continue to take action to protect themselves and their partners from HIV, but the strategies that some men are using have changed. Strategies such as selecting partners based on HIV status, or serosorting, have the potential to be effective at preventing HIV transmission, but they may be less effective in the real world when compared to other strategies, such as consistent and correct condom use. Today's broadcast discusses these issues and highlights examples of prevention efforts by researchers, health departments, community organizations and others working together to conduct effective interventions to prevent the further spread of HIV/AIDS among MSM.

**[Announcer]** *To access the most accurate and relevant health information, that affects you, your family and your community, please visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).*