

# Russia has 'no anti-AIDS strategy', official says

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There is no government strategy to fight the spread of AIDS in Russia, where the number of deaths caused by the disease continues to grow, a senior healthcare official said on Thursday.

"We have no national strategy to fight against AIDS," the director of the Russian Federal Agency against AIDS, Vadim Pokrovsky, told a news conference.

The rate of new HIV infections grew 12 percent in 2012—69,849 new cases against 62,384 new cases in 2011, according to the government figures.

The number of deaths caused by AIDS in Russia also continued to grow, with 20,511 deaths registered in 2012 against 18,414 deaths in 2011—an 11.4 percent increase.

"The state spends 19 billion rubles (\$606 million, 470 million euros) a year for diagnosis and treatment of people who have contracted AIDS and only 200 million rubles for [prevention programs](#)," Pokrovsky said.

"We are fighting not against the epidemic itself, but against its consequences... In the absence of prevention (measures) we should expect an increase in the number of new cases," he added.

The high rates of AIDS-related mortality in Russia are caused by a widespread practice of a delayed anti-retroviral treatment as doctors

often use expensive drugs sparingly, Pokrovsky said.

In total, some 720,000 people have contracted HIV in Russia since the first cases were recorded in the country in 1987, according to the latest official statistics. Nearly 130,000 patients have died so far.

But a 2011 report by the United Nations AIDS agency, UNAIDS, puts the real figure of HIV-infected people at about 1.2 million people—roughly one percent of the [adult population](#).

In Western and [Central Europe](#), the rate is five times lower—at about 0.2 percent.

Experts speak of "a generalisation of the [AIDS epidemic](#)" that affects not just high-risk groups—such as [drug addicts](#) or prostitutes—but all of society, said Pokrovsky.

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