

Almost 21 million worldwide now have access to HIV meds

November 21 2017



(HealthDay)—The number of people with HIV who take life-saving

antiretroviral medications has increased by tens of millions worldwide in recent decades, a United Nations report says.

The number rose from 685,000 in 2000 to 20.9 million as of June 2017, according to UNAIDS, the Joint United Nations Program on HIV and AIDS.

"Many [people](#) do not remember that in 2000 there were only 90 people in South Africa on treatment," Michel Sidibe, executive director of UNAIDS, said in an agency news release.

"Today, South Africa has the biggest life-saving treatment program in the world, with more than 4 million people on treatment," Sidibe said. "This is the kind of acceleration we need to encourage, sustain and replicate."

The new report also said that because more people with HIV are receiving treatment, more of them are alive and well.

Research also shows that people with HIV who adhere to [antiretroviral treatment](#) are up to 97 percent less likely to transmit the AIDS-causing virus to others. And as treatment has become more available to pregnant women, there has been a sharp drop in the number of children born with HIV.

However, a number of challenges remain, the report said. One is to provide antiretroviral treatment to over 17 million people with HIV who currently aren't receiving it, including 919,000 children.

Another challenge is to make HIV prevention a public health priority again, particularly in nations with rising HIV infection rates. In eastern Europe and central Asia, for example, the rate of new infections has risen 60 percent since 2010 and AIDS-related deaths have increased 27

percent, according to the new report.

More information: The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has more on [HIV treatment](#).

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Citation: Almost 21 million worldwide now have access to HIV meds (2017, November 21)
retrieved 4 May 2024 from
<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2017-11-million-worldwide-access-hiv-meds.html>

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