

**THERE'S  
SOMETHING  
SPECIAL  
ABOUT THE  
HEALTH OF**

the  
**AFRICAN  
AMERICAN  
COMMUNITY**

## HIV and AIDS: A growing crisis you can take steps to avoid

More so than for other ethnic groups, HIV and AIDS pose a particular threat to the African American community. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) even refers to it as a “health crisis for African Americans.”<sup>1</sup>

As with many other populations, factors that are contributing to this crisis include the stigma attached to the disease, reluctance to visit a doctor, lack of quality health care, and shortage of disposable income that can be used for treatment.

The following 2005 HIV and AIDS statistics from the CDC illustrate the continued need for education and awareness:

- African American adults accounted for 49% of the new HIV/AIDS cases reported.
- 63% of children under 13 diagnosed with HIV/AIDS were African American.

- African Americans don't live as long with the disease as do people of other races and ethnic groups.

Fortunately, you don't have to become one of the numbers. Here are some steps you can take to help keep yourself healthy:

- **Get tested.** Infected individuals may be symptom-free for up to ten years, so talk to your doctor about being tested. Planned Parenthood and neighborhood health clinics also offer testing and counseling. To search for a test site near you, visit <http://aids.gov/>.
- **Practice safe sex.** Abstinence from sex is the best protection. However, if you're sexually active, use a condom every time. Be sure your partner has been tested, and don't take risks.
- **Educate yourself.** Learn more about the disease or find a testing site near you. Visit the CDC's website at [www.cdc.gov/hiv](http://www.cdc.gov/hiv).

**Independence Blue Cross members can also call a Health Coach at 1-800-ASK-BLUE (1-800-275-2583), 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for information about many common health issues, including HIV/AIDS. Health Coaches are a prime example of how we're here for you every step of the way.**



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