

## **AIDS Vancouver**

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## **News Release**

### **A matter of fairness: AIDS Vancouver launches campaign for better HIV therapy options in BC**

*Long-acting injectable therapy would reduce stigma, improve adherence, and save lives*

VANCOUVER — British Columbia is the only province in Canada where people living with HIV are being denied access to the latest and most effective treatments. Long-acting injectable HIV treatment is a safe and effective way to manage HIV with a single injection every one or two months instead of daily pills.

That's the reason for a new advocacy campaign launched today by AIDS Vancouver — a charity providing direct support to people living with, and affected by, HIV throughout the Lower Mainland for 40 years.

“For decades, British Columbia has been a world leader in treatment and support for people living with HIV/AIDS. But today that leadership is at risk, as British Columbians are denied access to the latest, most innovative HIV treatments,” said Wayne Campbell, Community Programs Coordinator. “Right now, people living with HIV are dependent on daily, pill-based oral regimens. Since 2020, there have been treatment options available that make HIV even more manageable through long-acting injectable therapy that can be administered every one or two months by a healthcare professional.”

AIDS Vancouver is asking supporters to visit their website at **[www.aidsvancouver.org/treatment\\_now](http://www.aidsvancouver.org/treatment_now)** and sign a letter to BC health officials, calling on the provincial government to include these long-acting injectable therapy options under public health coverage.

A survey of nearly 2,400 people living with HIV showed that many face life-altering challenges with pill-based HIV treatments, including:

- 38% worried that the need to take pills daily could inadvertently expose their HIV status to others including a spouse or family members, potentially putting their lives and careers at risk,
- 35% said the need to take HIV pills every day caused them to have a bad feeling about their medicines and recall bad memories from their past, and
- 33% felt stressed by the need to take HIV medicines every day.

“While the current lack of access to innovative treatments in BC affects all people living with HIV, the worst impacts are being felt by communities with more barriers,” Sarah Chown, Executive Director said. “It was young people who have been living with HIV since birth who first explained to me the pressing need for injectable HIV treatment. It is nearly impossible for youth to take daily pills and participate fully in their communities – school trips, sleepovers, and sports tournaments - while keeping their HIV status private. For many people living with HIV, current pill-based treatments are a daily reminder of trauma, and in some cases, put them at risk of violence.”

As one of the first AIDS service organizations in Canada, AIDS Vancouver has long been involved in ensuring all people living with HIV have information about, and access to, the newest developments in HIV treatment and care.

The organization works closely with partners including the Afro-Canadian Positive Network, Community-Based Research Centre, Health Initiative for Men, Vancouver Island Persons Living With HIV/AIDS Society, and YouthCO.

**For More Information:**

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