About Preventive HIV Vaccines: Confronting the Myths

Myth 1: An HIV vaccine exists already.

You may have heard that there’s already a vaccine to prevent the spread of the HIV virus which causes AIDS, but that’s just a rumor. There is no preventive HIV vaccine yet. The best scientists in the world are working hard to develop such a vaccine, but no one knows when they will succeed.

Myth 2: Volunteering for vaccine trials is dangerous.

Actually, it is not possible to contract AIDS from an HIV vaccine. That’s because preventive HIV vaccines do not contain the HIV virus which causes AIDS. Instead, they are being designed with a copy of the HIV virus that is produced in a laboratory. This artificial virus is not dangerous, but it may be able to enhance your immune system’s ability to fight off HIV infection.

Myth 3: Vaccine volunteers must have AIDS.

Completely false. Actually, to participate in the preventive HIV vaccine trials you must be “sero-negative,” which means, not infected with the HIV virus.

Myth 4: Why should I worry? I’m not gay.

AIDS can effect anyone, not just men who have sex with men or intravenous drug users. As a matter of fact, in the U.S. Latino community, HIV infections are spreading particularly quickly among heterosexual women. And, there are over 600 Latino children under the age of 5 infected with the HIV virus in this country today.

Myth 5. A vaccine isn’t that important anyway.

AIDS is one of the most dangerous health threats in the world. Every day, across the planet, 14,000 people become infected with HIV. Already, in our U.S. Latino community, over 150,000 people have been diagnosed with AIDS. In the words of Dr. Emilio Emini, head of vaccine research for the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative, “the only thing that one can do at this point to deal with this infection... is to keep uninfected people from becoming infected. And the only way to do that is to have a successful vaccine.”

For more information, call
The National Hispanic Resource Help-Line
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