



HIV Vaccine Research in America: 5 Questions Answered

1. What is the government doing to develop a preventive HIV vaccine?

In 1999, the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases established the HIV Vaccine Trials Network (HVTN) to develop and test preventive HIV vaccines.

2. Who are the researchers?

Some of the best scientists in the country and the world are working to develop a preventive HIV vaccine. Doctors and medical researchers from universities, private organizations, and federal and local governments are all participating in HVTN initiatives. In the U.S., there are vaccine trial sites in 10 different cities.

3. What are “clinical trials”?

“Clinical trials” are research studies in humans to determine whether new drugs or treatments are safe and effective. Before a test vaccine can even be used in clinical trials, it must first go through animal testing. Only those vaccines that are well-tolerated by animals can move on to human testing. Furthermore, preventive HIV vaccines do not contain the HIV virus, so no one can ever “catch” HIV from a vaccine.

4. How do clinical trials work?

Clinical trials take place in 3 phases. A test vaccine must perform well in each phase in order to advance to the next phase.

In Phase I, the test vaccine is given to just a few people (20-100) to make sure it is safe in humans.

In Phase II, hundreds of volunteers participate. Researchers still want to learn about the safety of the test vaccine, but they also gather information about how it effects the human immune system.

In Phase III, thousands of volunteers participate. Again, safety is tested, and researchers also study how effective the test vaccine is in preventing the spread of HIV infection.

5. How can I get involved?

HVTN is particularly interested in involving people from all different cultural and ethnic groups in its trials and in its public education efforts. In fact, each vaccine trial site has a Community Advisory Board which advises researchers on how best to work with the local community. Visit their Web site at www.hvtn.org.

For more information, call



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