HIV Vaccine Awareness Day 2025

#HVAD is Sunday, May 18. It arrives at a promising moment in HIV prevention—and as science, research and health care are under attack.

May 16, 2025 By Trent Straube

Sunday, May 18, marks HIV Vaccine Awareness Day (#HVAD) 2025, a time to recognize and pay tribute to the many scientists, health care professionals, volunteers, community members and others working to develop a safe and effective preventive HIV vaccine.

Although no preventive vaccine for HIV is currently available, scientists have long been working to develop one. In fact, this year marks the 28th annual observance of HVAD, which aligns with the anniversary of the first international AIDS vaccine trial, which was initiated in 1997. At the time, President Bill Clinton declared that "only a truly effective, preventive HIV vaccine can limit and eventually eliminate the threat of AIDS."

In previous years, HVAD was spearheaded by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), as a way to raise awareness and educate the public about the importance of HIV vaccine research.

In 2025, however, the new Trump administration and Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. have been dismantling the national health department, laying off federal workers, defunding research grants and eliminating entire health care programs.

"By promoting quackery, we are endangering the health of the American people with pseudoscience, fearmongering, and misinformation." Well said, @delauro.house.gov ro.house.gov. #NIH funding drives lifesaving innovation and economic progress. Read AVAC's take: avac.org/blog/2026-bu...

[image or embed]

— AVAC (@avac.org) May 14, 2025 at 11:27 AM

These attacks are taking place as groundbreaking HIV prevention has made significant strides.

This year's HVAD also coincides with the 30th anniversary of the launch of AVAC, a global nonprofit focused on effective HIV prevention.

This #HVAD2025 comes as the US administration is dismantling #HIV research & demolishing the architecture of #globalhealth. The world runs the risk of reversing the strides made to end HIV. Read how advocacy and science must move forward, avac.org/blog/hvad2025 #HVAD2025

[image or embed]

— AVAC (@avac.org) May 14, 2025 at 2:17 PM

In honor of HIV Vaccine Awareness Day 2025, AVAC released a statement that reads in part:

> This May 18, HIV Vaccine Awareness Day (HVAD), comes as HIV vaccine science and collaboration have never had more promise—and as AVAC celebrates its 30th anniversary. When AVAC began in 1995, we were the AIDS Vaccine Advocacy Coalition, founded to speed research and development, grounded in equity, for an HIV vaccine. As the potential of PrEP [pre-exposure prophylaxis] and other HIV prevention emerged, we broadened our focus to ensure progress across the pipeline of prevention research and to advocate for delivery and access to new interventions.
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> HVAD 2025 comes as the U.S. presidential administration is actively working to dismantle HIV research and demolish the architecture of global health. The entire HIV response—from basic

research and clinical development to policy, programs and global access to lifesaving treatment and prevention—is now under attack, and the world runs the risk of reversing the strides made to end HIV.

These threats to the HIV response could not have come at a more critical time for prevention. Regulatory approvals and introduction of injectable lenacapavir for PrEP are imminent; the first-ever antiretroviral-based, dual-purpose product to prevent pregnancy and HIV is also poised for rollout; and a range of next-generation products, including new HIV vaccine approaches, to meet diverse user needs was being ushered through upstream development—all work that benefited from U.S. funding that is now in jeopardy.

To put all of this in perspective, AVAC has put together a report, HIV Prevention R&D at Risk: Tracking the Impact of US Funding Cuts, highlighting the impact of U.S. cuts on the pipeline of HIV prevention research and development. AVAC will continue to track these cuts and their impact, to amplify the damage they will cause and to fight for their reversal.

For decades, both sides of the aisle of U.S. politics have recognized that this work brings our country prosperity, security, improved health and pride. With the quest for an HIV vaccine now in early upstream R&D, the story of lenacapavir for PrEP shows the essential importance of bipartisan political support for the NIH; the need to invest in long-term global research capacity; the power of public-private partnerships; and the essential role of community engagement and advocacy to accelerate R&D and delivery.

For more testimony about these issues, you can also watch a new video documenting the 25 years of progress and leadership of the NIH-funded HIV Vaccine Trials Network (HVTN).

This HVAD, AVAC invites you to join us in the fight to protect, sustain and rebuild. The webinars and resources provided below frame the issues and include tools and key messages for your advocacy!

Webinars

- May 16 at 9 a.m. ET, "Recent Advances in Eliciting Broadly Neutralizing Antibodies (bNAbs) for HIV-1 Vaccine Development"

  Global HIV Vaccine Enterprise

Explores cutting-edge approaches in HIV-1 vaccine development. Experts will discuss innovative immunogen design, B-cell maturation strategies and key findings from clinical and preclinical studies. Learn how translational research is shaping the next generation of HIV vaccines. Register

- May 28 at 9 a.m. ET, "HIV Prevention at a Crossroads: Why we still need an HIV vaccine"
  Global HIV Vaccine Enterprise and IAVI

  Discusses the continued need for an HIV vaccine in the context of the expanding HIV prevention landscape and uncertain geopolitical environment. Panelists and audience members are invited to explore the potential public health impact of an HIV vaccine, including related socioeconomic and equity considerations. Participants will further reflect on the rising threat to vaccine science and why investments in HIV vaccine R&D remain a strategic priority in the global HIV response. Register

- June 11 at 11 a.m. ET, "The Scientific Journey of Lenacapavir: From basic science to clinical development to impact"
  AVAC

  Join us for the compelling story of the development of lenacapavir and the critical role of U.S. support. Wes Sundquist, from the University of Utah, will share the story of capsid inhibitor discovery, and Linda-Gail Bekker, from the Desmond Tutu HIV Foundation, will discuss the critical role of South Africa in clinical development; all of this work is backed by long-term U.S. support. Register.

Click here to learn more about 2025 HIV and AIDS awareness days, and click here for a printable poster.

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