

December 2011 Issue

Dr. David Dodson is interviewed on the 30 year anniversary of the AIDS virus and how far we have come since its first outbreak in 1981.

Stopping the Stigma

4 things you might not know about HIV/AIDS



The year 2011 marks 30 years since the first reported case of AIDS in the U.S., and Dec. 1 is World AIDS Day. Dr. David Dodson, an infectious disease control doctor with Good Samaritan Medical Center, breaks down some myths about the disease.

- **Myth:** AIDS can be transferred by donating or receiving blood.
- **Reality:** While at one time this was the case, the blood supply is tested now so it's not an issue anymore, Dodson says. "The blood supply is the safest it's ever been in the United States," he says.
- **Myth:** If I had AIDS, I would know it.
- **Reality:** It's currently estimated that 1.1 million people are infected with HIV, and of those, about 20 percent don't know they have it, Dodson says. On average, there are basically no symptoms of HIV for about 10 years after infection, he says.
- **Myth:** AIDS is only confined to certain populations.
- **Reality:** While HIV is often transmitted through drug use or homosexual sex, international HIV and AIDS charity AVERT estimated that during 2009 alone, more than 13,000 people living in U.S. contracted the disease from heterosexual sex or other causes.
- **Myth:** Getting tested is not necessary if you don't have the risk factors.
- **Reality:** The CDC estimates that each year, 50,000 new people are infected with HIV, he says. The fact that we're still having new cases shows people aren't getting tested and don't know they're spreading HIV, Dodson says. "Everyone is talking about health-care costs, but we save health-care dollars with screening," he says.

BY THE NUMBERS: HOLIDAY SAFETY

More than **14,000** people annually wind up in emergency rooms with injuries related to holiday decorating, according to the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission.

260 home fires start with dry Christmas trees each year, according to the National Fire Protection Association.

76 percent of Americans decorate for the holidays, according to the Electrical Safety Foundation International.

More than **20 percent** of people don't turn off holiday lights or electrical decorations before going to sleep or leaving the house, according to the Electrical Safety Foundation International.