

Early AIDS Timeline

Approximate AIDS cases and deaths in the early years.

Year	Cases	Deaths
1981	270	120
1982	660	430
1983	2,000	1,400
1984	4,400	3,300
1985	8,100	6,700
1986	13,000	11,500

1981

June 3 – Center for Disease Control’s Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report: 20 homosexual men in New York City and 6 in California.

June 3 – New York Times article “Rare Cancer Seen in 41 Homosexuals”, on page A20

The popular name for the disease was “Gay Cancer”. The CDC named it “Gay Related Immune Deficiency” (GRID)

1982

January 1982 – Gay Men’s Health Crisis created in Larry Kramer’s apartment in New York City.

August 1982 – The CDC renames GRID to “Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome” (AIDS)

1983

March – United States Public Health Service issues blood donor screening guidelines for gay men. They are still in effect; you can’t give blood if you are a male who has had sexual contact with another male, even once, since 1977.

May 25 – New York Times publishes first front page article about AIDS.

May - Dr. Luc Montagnier's team at the Pasteur Institute in France reported that they had isolated a new retrovirus that they believed was the cause of AIDS. The virus was later named lymphadenopathy-associated virus (LAV).

1984

May - A team led by Robert Gallo of the United States confirmed the discovery of the virus, but they renamed it human T lymphotropic virus type III (HTLV-III)

December 17 -- Ryan White, an Indiana teenager, was diagnosed with AIDS, transmitted by a blood transfusion for hemophilia.

1985

March -- After number of more-detailed reports were published concerning LAV and HTLV-III, it was clear that the viruses were the same, were from the same source, and were the etiological agent of AIDS.

March 2 -- The FDA approves the first commercially available test for detecting HIV in blood.

September 17 – President Reagan mentions the word “AIDS” in public for the first time, but only in response to a reporter’s question.

October 2 -- Rock Hudson dies of AIDS.

1986

May -- The International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses ruled that both names should be dropped and a new name, HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus), be used.

1987

March – AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT-UP) formed and becomes a very effective activist group.

April 2 – After almost no mentions about AIDS since his 1985 news conference, President Reagan delivers his first “major speech” on AIDS, calling it “public enemy number one”. Vice President George Bush is heckled when he calls for mandatory HIV testing.

AZT (zidovudine), the first antiretroviral drug, becomes available to treat HIV.

1992 -- The first combination drug therapies for HIV are introduced. Such "cocktails" are more effective than AZT alone.

1995 – Highly Active Anti-Retroviral Therapy (HAART) turns HIV infection into a manageable disease for most infected people.