



Singapore sees more HIV infections in 07

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SINGAPORE (AP) — Singapore recorded 422 new HIV infections last year, the highest number in a single year since records started in 1985, the city-state of 4.5 million people said Tuesday.

More than half of the new cases already had late-stage HIV infections when they were diagnosed, as happened in previous years, the Health Ministry said. It urged people who are at high risk of contracting the virus to go for tests.

"There is thus an urgent need for persons who engage in high risk behavior such as unprotected casual sex, sex with prostitutes, and intravenous drug abuse to go for regular HIV testing," the ministry's Web site said in an update of the HIV/AIDS situation in the prosperous Southeast Asian country.

Ninety-three percent of the new infections were among men and 95 percent were transmitted through sex, it said.

Nearly two-thirds of the sexual transmissions occurred during heterosexual sex, the update said.

It said the number of intravenous transmissions fell last year to seven, half of the number recorded in 2006.

The new cases bring the total number of known HIV-infected Singaporeans to 3,482 as of the end of last year, the ministry said. More than 1,100 of them have died.

The ministry also noted that Parliament last week passed an amendment to the law to tighten regulations on HIV transmissions.

The existing law penalized anyone who knows he or she is infected with HIV but is found to have failed to tell a partner about it before sex. The amendment includes individuals "who have reason to believe" that they have been exposed to a significant risk of contracting HIV or AIDS.

The amendment says those individuals must take "reasonable precautions" — such as using condoms or being tested — to protect their sexual partners. Otherwise, they must inform their partner of the risk of contracting HIV from them and leave it to them to accept the risk if they wish. If the partner accepts, no legal offense is committed.

A person found guilty of not informing a partner or of failing to take such precautions faces a maximum penalty of a 50,000 Singapore dollar (\$36,735) fine and 10 years' imprisonment.