

AIDS: Koop Urges Test Before Pregnancy

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AIDS virus out of nearly 1.3 million tested thus far.

As of December, the Pentagon said, 2,139 men and women among the 1,274,072 given the test were positive. There are 2.1 million people currently in the military.

Koop, who will sponsor a conference in Philadelphia next month on pediatric AIDS, made his remarks during a question-and-answer session after a speech to the National Press Club.

Test Determines Exposure

The test determines whether individuals have been exposed to the virus that causes AIDS, not whether they will contract the deadly disease. Someone who tests positive, however, is presumed to be infected and infectious to others.

Most of the 462 children who have contracted AIDS in this country were infected by their mothers during pregnancy. Of these, 291 have died.

While estimates vary, many researchers believe that there is about a 50% chance that an infected mother will transmit the virus to her fetus.

Last year the Public Health Service recommended that women in high-risk groups—intravenous drug users, prostitutes and the sexual partners of men at risk—voluntarily undergo the test before becoming pregnant. But it stopped short of recommending the test for all women.

Koop, a vocal opponent of abortion, also said that abortion should be mentioned among all the options given a pregnant woman who discovers she is infected with the virus. "It is my understanding," Koop said, that in major obstetrical clinics on the East Coast, infected women who are less than 13 weeks pregnant "are being advised to have abortions, and about 50% of those are indeed having abortions."

The Defense Department said the infected military personnel consisted of 1,116 of the 531,430 tested in the Navy and Marine Corps; 797 of 569,158 examined in the Army; and 226 of 173,484 tested in the Air Force. The figures translate into rates of about 2 per 1,000 for the Navy and Marine Corps, 1.4 per 1,000 for the Army and 1.3 per 1,000 for the Air Force.

The infection rate among the military is slightly higher than the 1.5 per 1,000 recorded among recruits applying for service, the Pentagon told United Press International.

AIDS, or acquired immune deficiency syndrome, destroys the

body's immune system, leaving it powerless against certain cancers and otherwise rare infections. The virus can also invade the central nervous system, causing severe neurological disorders. It is commonly transmitted through anal and vaginal sexual intercourse, through the sharing of unsterilized hypodermic needles and by woman to fetus during pregnancy.

In this country, AIDS has primarily afflicted homosexual and bisexual men, intravenous drug users and their sexual partners. As of Monday, a total of 33,158 Americans had contracted AIDS, of whom 19,192 had died.

Koop Calls for AIDS Test Before Any Pregnancy

By MARLENE CIMONS,
Times Staff Writer

WASHINGTON—Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, who has become the Reagan Administration's most visible spokesman on AIDS, recommended Tuesday that any woman considering pregnancy first voluntarily undergo the AIDS antibody test.

Koop, who opposes mandatory testing of individuals, described his "great concern" for babies born to mothers who test positive for the fatal disease. "I think no woman should contemplate a pregnancy without voluntarily wanting to be tested for the AIDS virus," he said.

Meanwhile, the Pentagon announced that more than 2,100 active-duty military personnel have tested positive for exposure to the

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