



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

# NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE PUBLICATION  
February 14, 2005  
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## **POSSIBLE RARE FORM OF HIV VIRUS WARRANTS CAUTION**

*Scientists Studying Virus; San Diego County Health and Human Services Issues Warning*

The San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) has learned that a possible rare form of the HIV virus now being studied by scientists in New York City may have a San Diego connection.

A Feb. 14 report from the *New York Times* newspaper says a virus from an unidentified San Diego resident is one of two samples being studied to see if either might be the source of a rare, possibly aggressive, possibly drug resistant form of HIV detected in a New York City man, officials said.

“There is a lot we do not know about this, and much more research must be done to get answers,” said Nancy Bowen, M.D., San Diego County Health Officer. “We do not wish to frighten anyone unnecessarily. However, we want the public to know that this investigation is taking place and to continue to emphasize guidelines that keep the HIV virus from spreading.”

Scientists emphasize that there are other factors that can weaken the immune system including genetics and drug use, Dr. Bowen said.

Locally, HHSA is sending alerts to local health care and service providers so that they may issue health advisories to their patients and keep them informed, she said.

Protection guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention include:

- Abstain from sexual intercourse, or to be in a long-term mutually monogamous relationship with a partner who has been tested and you know is uninfected.
- Correct and consistent use of a condom can reduce the risk of STD transmission. However, no protective method is 100 percent effective. The more sex partners you have, the greater your chances are of getting HIV or other diseases passed through sex.
- Don't share needles and syringes.

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