

AIDS : don't die of ignorance : government information 1987 / issued by the Department of Health and Social Security.

Contributors

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**WHAT CAN'T
YOU CATCH
THE VIRUS
FROM**

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The Government's clear medical advice is that you cannot get the AIDS virus from normal social contact with someone who is infected.

You cannot get it from shaking hands. Nor is there any record of anyone becoming infected through kissing.

There is no danger in sharing cups or cutlery. Nor can you catch it from public baths or toilets.

In hospitals, standard disinfection precautions protect patients, visitors and staff.

Giving blood is safe. All the equipment is only used once.

And all the blood used in this country for blood transfusion is rigorously checked.

**HOW SAFE
IS IT
ABROAD**

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The AIDS virus exists throughout the world. In certain areas a large number of both men and women have it.

So it is even more important that you follow the advice in this leaflet if you're going abroad.

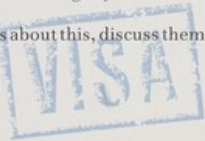
Otherwise if you do have sex with someone who is not your usual partner, not only might you become

infected, but you may also infect your partner when you return home.

Again, in some countries blood transfusions are not checked for the AIDS virus. In those places where the virus is widespread do not, if you can possibly avoid it, have blood from a local donor.

Also, in certain developing countries, medical equipment may not be properly sterilised. If you can, avoid any treatment involving injections and surgical procedures.

If you have any worries about this, discuss them with your family doctor.



**DO YOU
NEED MORE
INFORMATION**

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The true picture about AIDS is that, at the moment, relatively few have the virus in this country. Those most at risk now are men who have anal sex with other men. Drug misusers who share equipment. Anyone with many sexual partners. And sexual partners of any of these people.

But the virus *is* spreading. And as it does, so the risk of having sex with someone who is infected increases.

Ultimately, defence against the disease depends on all of us taking responsibility for our own actions.

More detailed information is available from: Your own doctor.

Clinics for sexually transmitted diseases. (Look in the phone book under Venereal or Sexually Transmitted Diseases or your nearest main hospital.)

Special AIDS line 0800-555777.

Healthline Telephone Service 01-981 2717,

01-980 7222, 0545-581151. (If you're phoning from outside London, use the 0545 number and you'll be charged at local rates.)

Terrence Higgins Trust 01-855 2971.

Welsh AIDS Campaign 0222-464121.

Scottish AIDS Monitor 051-558 1167.

Northern Ireland AIDS line Belfast 226117 (Friday 7.30 pm to 10.00 pm.)

London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard 01-857 7524.

SCODA (Standing Conference on Drug Abuse)

01-450 2541.

For a copy of the more detailed booklet AIDS: What Everybody Needs to Know, write to Dept. A, PO Box 100, Milton Keynes, MK1 1TX. (In Scotland write for The AIDS Problem: What Everybody Needs to Know, to the Scottish Health Education Group, Woodburn House, Canaan Lane, Edinburgh EH10 4SG.)

If you're travelling abroad, read leaflet SA55, Protect Your Health Abroad, available from travel agents.

D O N ' T A I D A I D S

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AIDS

**DON'T DIE
OF
IGNORANCE**

GOVERNMENT INFORMATION 1987

WHY ARE YOU BEING SENT THIS LEAFLET

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This leaflet is being sent to every household in the country. It is about AIDS. And everyone now needs to know the facts. It explains what the disease is. How it is spread. How serious a threat it is. And how it can be avoided.

Because it has to deal with matters of health and sex, you may find some of the information disturbing. But please make sure that everyone who may need this advice reads this leaflet.

The more people know about AIDS, the less likely it is to be spread.

So if you have children, think carefully what they need to know. Whether you approve or not, many teenagers do have sex and some may experiment with drugs.

Even if you think your children don't, they will need advice because they may have friends who encourage them to.

WHY SHOULD YOU BE CONCERNED ABOUT AIDS

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Any man or woman can get the AIDS virus depending on their behaviour. It is not just a homosexual disease.

There is no cure. And it kills.

By the time you read this, probably 500 people will have died in this country. It is believed that a further 50,000 carry the virus. This number is rising and will continue to rise unless we all take precautions.

WHAT IS AIDS

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AIDS is caused by a virus. This can attack the body's defence system which normally helps fight off diseases and infections.

And if this happens people can then develop AIDS - the disease itself. They become ill and die from illnesses they cannot fight off.

HOW DO YOU BECOME INFECTED

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Because the virus can be present in semen and vaginal fluid, this means for most people the only real danger comes through having sexual intercourse with an infected person. This means vaginal or anal sex. (It could also be that oral sex can be risky particularly if semen is taken into the mouth.)

So the virus can be passed from man to man, man to woman and woman to man.

For those who inject drugs, there is the added risk from sharing needles or equipment with someone who is infected.

Finally, babies born to mothers who are infected have a high chance of being born with the virus.

HOW CAN YOU PROTECT YOURSELF FROM AIDS

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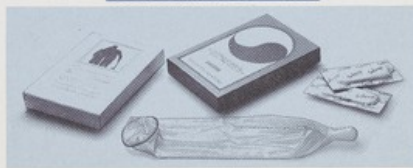
Most people who have the virus don't even know it. They may look and feel completely well. So you cannot know who is infected and who isn't. To protect yourself follow these guidelines.

The more sexual partners you have, especially male partners, the more chance you have of having sex with someone who is infected. It is safest to stick to one faithful partner.

FEWER PARTNERS, LESS RISK.

Unless you are sure of your partner, always use a condom (sheath or rubber). This will reduce the risk of catching the virus.

USE CONDOMS FOR SAFER SEX.



It's also best to use a water-based lubricating gel with the condom. Oil-based gels can weaken the rubber. Ask your chemist for advice.

The contraceptive pill is no protection against AIDS.

Anyone who misuses drugs should not inject. If you ever do, never share equipment (needles, syringes, mixing bowls, etc.). You could be injecting the virus straight into your blood stream. It is extremely dangerous.



DON'T INJECT. NEVER SHARE.

IF YOU THINK YOU ARE INFECTED

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If you think you may be infected go to your family doctor for advice about having a test. Or go direct to a clinic for sexually transmitted diseases for confidential advice and a test if you wish. If you have the virus, they'll let you know and give you help and support.

WHAT ABOUT THINGS THAT PIERCE THE SKIN

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It is *not* safe to use equipment for ear-piercing, tattooing or acupuncture unless you know it is unused or has been sterilised. Nor is it safe to share a toothbrush or razor of someone who is infected. These things could give you the virus through infected blood.