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AIDS. THE FACTS.

This is the first advertisement in a series produced to explain the facts about AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome). Not since the plague years of the Middle Ages or the great influenza epidemics early in this century has there been such a major threat to the health and well-being of the peoples of the world.

The great popularity and frequency of international travel means no country can hope to avoid AIDS. It is now a worldwide problem, and affects everyone. At present New Zealand is fortunate to lag behind the United States, Europe, and Australia in the development of the epidemic. We can still avoid a major problem in this country by educating the public.

THE NEW ZEALAND AIDS FOUNDATION has been set up to handle this task. In the months ahead, easy-to-understand information will be presented to inform and educate all sectors of the community about the dangers of AIDS. To many people AIDS is a bewildering and frightening disease. THE NEW ZEALAND AIDS FOUNDATION will emphasise in this prevention campaign the enormous importance of public education and awareness. Without this, the disease will affect large numbers of New Zealanders. It is essential that all the facts about AIDS are known if fear, rumour and myth are to be dispelled.

WHAT IS AIDS?

AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) is a fatal disease that destroys the body's natural defences against infection and cancer. Opportunistic infections take advantage of the poor immune defences found in people with AIDS. *Pneumocystis carinii* pneumonia (PCP) is the most common opportunistic infection. Unusual cancers such as Kaposi's sarcoma (KS) and lymphoma also occur in AIDS patients. There are over 30 viruses, bacteria and fungi that take advantage of the damaged immune system while posing no threat to other people.

AIDS Related Condition (ARC) is a lesser form of the same syndrome, and makes common illnesses such as herpes, thrush and diarrhoea more severe. ARC can be very serious, and up to 30% of ARC patients develop life threatening infections within 5 years. AIDS and ARC are caused by a virus called LAV in France and HTLV-III in the U.S.A. Many different strains have now been discovered, and the virus appears to have originated in Africa and changed rapidly as it spread around the world. The large number of different strains - currently over 200 - make the development of a single vaccine most unlikely.

WHERE DID AIDS COME FROM?

AIDS appears to be a new disease, although some forms of the AIDS virus have been relatively widespread in the central African continent for many years. It is possibly originated in monkeys. It has now been transmitted by human sexual contact and through infected blood to all parts of the world.

Over the last five years, the number of AIDS patients has doubled every six to nine months.

Throughout the Western world AIDS is affecting both males and females. It should be clearly understood that all persons are at risk from AIDS. It is not restricted to any particular group, caste, colour or race. AIDS is potentially as serious as the Black Death, a disease introduced to Europe in the Middle Ages by the Crusaders. This devastating plague decimated the world population. In the 17th Century venereal diseases were carried back from the New World by the Conquistadors and sailors. Education, personal hygiene and precautions against risky sexual behaviour have helped to greatly reduce the incidence of these diseases.

This advertisement is the beginning of a major campaign to ensure that AIDS is not able to take hold in

New Zealand. The fact that AIDS is a disease which can be sexually transmitted makes it a highly emotive subject. THE NEW ZEALAND AIDS FOUNDATION, backed by the Health Department, wants to reduce unwarranted hysteria about AIDS. Laying the blame for the appearance of AIDS in New Zealand on any particular group is unjust and serves no useful purpose. It also seriously harms our ability to control the epidemic.

Originally AIDS was labelled by the media as the 'gay plague'. We wish to dispel such prejudice. It is often the practice of the media to stigmatise a particular problem. Using similar propaganda, Hitler managed to blame certain minorities in Germany for all economic and social ills. It seems to be an inherent trait in many societies to take a problem and dump it on a particular stereotyped group. AIDS has quite wrongly been blamed on gay men.

New Zealand, like all nations, is now seriously threatened by AIDS. This disease has implications which affect each and every New Zealander, and which we must not ignore. As history shows, infectious diseases will affect anyone if the environment is right.

Science and medical research are racing against the clock to make a breakthrough in the treatment and the prevention of AIDS. In the meantime, everyone must learn how AIDS is transmitted. Our prevention guidelines are simple to follow and will be effective. Anyone who is at risk is strongly advised to phone or write to THE NEW ZEALAND AIDS FOUNDATION for our free brochures and other information on AIDS.

AIDS - SEX AND OTHER RISK FACTORS

First and foremost, AIDS is not a 'gay disease'. It must be clearly understood that homosexuality does not cause AIDS any more than breathing causes influenza. Both diseases are the result of infection by a virus. Homosexuality has existed since the beginning of time and was not associated with AIDS until the late 1970's. Gay men were among the first in Western countries to be exposed to the AIDS virus. In Africa AIDS is almost exclusively a heterosexual disease and it is spreading rapidly in heterosexual communities.

All sexually active people with multiple partners are now at some risk because the AIDS virus can be spread through sexual contact. However, it must be appreciated that at the moment the risk to the general population in New Zealand is low, and with good health education it can be kept at this level. Because intimate sexual contact or exposure to blood products is necessary to transmit the AIDS virus, it has so far been contained within those groups that were exposed first - gay men, haemophiliacs and intravenous drug users. Their patterns of behaviour spread the virus while people were unaware they were carrying it. As there is no known cure or vaccine for AIDS, it is essential that everyone immediately takes precautions against contracting the virus.

Prevention is the only answer we have to AIDS at present. The long incubation period of the disease in the absence of symptoms makes taking precautions even more crucial.

The disease spreads in communities long before the first cases appear - up to 2 or 3 years. Once contracted it may take anywhere between 6 months and 5 years or more for the symptoms to show. During all this time it is possible to pass the virus on to others, even though there are no obvious symptoms of disease. This asymptomatic carrier stage explains how AIDS has been unknowingly spread around the world by apparently healthy people.

So while New Zealand appears to be watching from the sidelines, the epidemic is almost certainly taking hold here. Everyone who is sexually active needs to

take AIDS seriously, to learn the risk reduction measures and to immediately implement those that are applicable to them.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

The general symptoms of AIDS often include the following:

- Swollen lymph glands, particularly in the neck, groin, and armpits, lasting for more than two months with no apparent cause.
- Persistent and unexplained fatigue that becomes progressively worse.
- A succession of recurring infections such as oral thrush, herpes, shingles and other diseases suggesting lowered immunity.
- Frequent fevers, night sweats, and unexpected weight loss greater than 4.5kg (10lbs) in less than two months.
- Persistent diarrhoea.
- Pink to purple flat or raised blotches, usually painless, on the arms, chest, face, legs, feet or in the throat. This is Kaposi's sarcoma (KS).
- A persistent dry cough accompanied by shortness of breath after even minor physical effort, not due to smoking or simple respiratory infection. This is *Pneumocystis carinii* pneumonia (PCP).
- Persistent headache, short-term memory loss and lack of concentration.
- Persistent white patches or unusual blemishes in the mouth or throat.

Many symptoms associated with AIDS are non-specific and occur with mild illnesses such as a cold, bronchitis, glandular fever and acute diarrhoea. What distinguishes AIDS is the duration of such symptoms, their severity, and their frequent co-existence with increasing general illness.

HOW CONTAGIOUS IS AIDS?

To date, no cases have been found where AIDS has been transmitted by casual contact with AIDS patients or with persons in high risk groups. For instance, household members who are not the sex partners of AIDS patients are highly unlikely to develop AIDS.

There is NO EVIDENCE to suggest that AIDS can be transmitted through sharing cups, plates, cutlery or other household objects.

There is NO EVIDENCE to suggest that AIDS can be caught from toilet seats.

There is NO EVIDENCE at present to suggest that AIDS can be passed on by mosquitoes.

Ambulance drivers, police and firemen who have offered emergency assistance to AIDS patients have NOT fallen ill.

Nurses, doctors, dentists and other health care personnel have NOT developed AIDS from regular exposure to AIDS patients.

AIDS - PREVENTION IS THE ONLY ANSWER AT PRESENT

The AIDS virus is found in SEMEN, BLOOD, URINE, FAECES and SALIVA which explains why the disease can be passed on by intimate sexual contact - both homosexual and heterosexual - and through the mixing of blood. Here is some sound advice:

- Avoid sexual activity in which high risk body fluids and wastes are exchanged - these are semen, blood, urine, faeces and saliva.
- It seems logical that the more sexual partners you have, the greater the risk of coming in contact with the virus - so reduce the number of your sexual partners.
- Avoid injecting illegal drugs and never share needles and syringes.
- Avoid sexual contact with persons who have multiple sex partners, or who are users of intravenous drugs.

COMMON SENSE - AVOIDING RISKY BEHAVIOUR

These basic rules are just common sense, and are guaranteed to lead to better all-round health. There are professionals available if you need help to modify any risky behaviour that you find especially hard to change. Just be careful not to substitute one unhealthy habit for another. It is very easy to turn to alcohol, tobacco or drugs without realising what is happening. Changing social habits often leads to stress, and it is important to minimise stress if you are to stay healthy.

- Get plenty of sleep, regular exercise, and eat wholesome food.
- Moderate your lifestyle where necessary. Do not use recreational drugs such as poppers, marijuana and cocaine, and reduce your consumption of alcohol and tobacco. Use of all these can damage your immune system, and some will also impair your judgement which may lead to risky sexual behaviour.

THE NEW ZEALAND AIDS FOUNDATION

THE NEW ZEALAND AIDS FOUNDATION is a national information and counselling group set up to prevent an AIDS epidemic in New Zealand by educating the public on all aspects of the disease. The FOUNDATION will give emotional and practical support to anyone affected by AIDS and ARC. It will also help their lovers, families and friends, and anyone who is worried about the disease. The FOUNDATION is now setting up a nationwide counselling service.

Call us Toll-Free, on Auckland 395-560.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

ASK HERE OR WRITE IN CONFIDENCE
TO THE NEW ZEALAND AIDS FOUNDATION,
BOX 6663, WELLESLEY ST, AUCKLAND 1,
OR PHONE THE NATIONWIDE AIDS TOLL-FREE
HOTLINE: AUCKLAND 395-560.