

Tell me about HIV, I don't know anyone with HIV... do I? Could I get HIV? : HIV: let's get talking : find out the facts about HIV so you can get talking at www.nat.org.uk / NAT.

Contributors

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Tell me
about HIV

I don't know
anyone with
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HIV: LET'S GET TALKING

Find out the facts about HIV
so you can get talking at
www.hiv.uk.com



Tell me about HIV

HIV is a virus that attacks the body's

immune system – the body's defence against diseases. A person infected with HIV may not have symptoms to start with, but eventually without effective treatment the immune system will become very weak and they will no longer be able to fight off illnesses.

Are HIV and AIDS the same?

No. When someone is described as HIV positive, they have the HIV virus in their body. A person is considered to have AIDS when the immune system is so weak it can no longer fight off a range of diseases with which it would normally cope.

Is there a cure for HIV?

No, but treatment can keep the virus under control and the immune system healthy. People on HIV treatment can live a healthy, active life, although they may suffer side effects from the treatment. If HIV is diagnosed late, treatment may be less effective in preventing AIDS.

How is HIV passed on?

HIV can be passed on through infected blood, semen, vaginal fluids or breast milk. The most common ways HIV is passed on are:

- ▶ Sex with someone living with HIV
- ▶ Sharing infected needles, syringes or other injecting equipment
- ▶ From an HIV positive mother to her child during pregnancy, childbirth or breastfeeding. However, there are steps mothers can take to reduce the possibility of their unborn child contracting HIV

Oral sex carries a much lower risk than penetrative sex, but HIV can still be passed on through cuts, gum problems or ulcers in the mouth if they come into contact with infected bodily fluids.

HIV cannot be passed on through:

- ▶ Kissing or touching
- ▶ Spitting, coughing or sneezing
- ▶ Toilet seats, swimming pools, or shared facilities or utensils



Could I get HIV?

If you are sexually active or use injecting equipment you could be at risk from getting HIV.

In the UK some communities have higher rates of infection, particularly gay and bisexual men and Black African men and women. However last year more heterosexual people than gay men were diagnosed with HIV in the UK.

How can I protect myself from HIV?

Always use a condom when having vaginal or anal sex. You may also want to use a condom during oral sex although the risk of transmission of HIV is much lower. Always use a condom that carries

the European CE safety mark. You can get free condoms from a family planning or sexual health clinic, which you can locate at www.fpa.org.uk/finder/

Never share needles, syringes or any other injecting equipment.

What do I do if I think I have put myself at risk?

If you think you have placed yourself at risk from infection by HIV you can ask for a free and confidential test at your local sexual health clinic, which you can locate at www.fpa.org.uk/finder/

If you are still within 72 hours of an incident of possible exposure to HIV you can also ask for PEP treatment from a sexual health clinic or at your nearest hospital Accident & Emergency department. The sooner treatment is begun the higher the probability the treatment will be effective.

Find out more about PEP at www.tht.org.uk/pep



HIV: LET'S GET TALKING

I don't know anyone with HIV... do I?

There are currently approximately 70,000 people living with HIV in the UK and about a third of these don't know they are infected. The epidemic

is still growing in the UK, with around 7,000 new diagnoses every year. Even if someone you know is living with HIV, they may not feel able to tell you.

Why do people find it hard to tell others they are HIV positive?

People living with HIV may find it hard to tell others about their condition as they worry that people will reject them, or they will experience prejudice from friends, family and colleagues. People living with HIV can also experience discrimination in their

workplace, in healthcare settings (e.g. GPs and dentists), from members of their local community and through the media.

HIV prejudice is often the result of ignorance about how HIV is passed on and unfounded fear of becoming infected. Encouraging those around us to talk about HIV and find out the facts can help overcome this.

What's it like living with HIV?

Everyone's experience is different. Many people find it difficult to come to terms with their diagnosis.

Some people experience stigma and discrimination from those around them. But some people living with HIV also talk about being empowered by their HIV status, taking the opportunity to educate others and challenge ignorance, and finding strength in themselves to live well. If you'd like to hear real stories from people living with HIV about their experiences you can listen to clips at www.hiv.uk.com



Find out the facts about HIV
so you can get talking at
www.hiv.uk.com



What can I do to get people talking about HIV?

you
me
US

- ▶ **Find out more about safer sex and what it means to you.** If you have a partner, talk to them about it too. Always practising safer sex demonstrates your concern for yourself and your sexual partner's wellbeing.
- ▶ **Get talking to friends, family and colleagues about HIV.** Talking can combat ignorance and prejudice, challenge taboos and stigma, and motivate others to find out more information about HIV for themselves.
- ▶ **Get talking to share experiences and knowledge of HIV issues, and educate others about HIV.** Share the information you know about HIV and ways to prevent its spread by talking to those around you. Take the initiative and lead those around you towards a better understanding of HIV.
- ▶ **Visit www.hiv.uk.com to find out more about HIV,** get further information on what you can do, join our campaign, and hear real experiences from people living with HIV.
- ▶ **Wear a red ribbon and encourage friends and family to do the same.** It's a talking point, and an easy and visible way to open conversations about HIV and highlight HIV issues all year round.



You can buy a variety of red ribbons and other materials from <http://shop.nat.org.uk>

HIV: LET'S GET TALKING

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so you can get talking at
www.hiv.uk.com



**Where can I
find out more?**

**Find out the facts about HIV so you can
get talking at www.hiv.uk.com**

For confidential information and advice
about HIV and safer sex call the National
Sexual Health Helpline on **0800 567 123**

To locate your nearest family planning
or sexual health clinic visit
www.fpa.org.uk/finder/

Keep up-to-date on HIV issues and what
you can do at **www.nat.org.uk**

The **National AIDS Trust** is the UK's
leading independent policy and campaigning
voice on HIV.

**All our work is focused on achieving
four strategic goals:**

- ▶ Effective HIV prevention in order to halt the spread of HIV and AIDS
- ▶ Early diagnosis of HIV through ethical, accessible and appropriate testing
- ▶ Equity of access to treatment, care and support for people living with HIV
- ▶ Eradication of HIV-related stigma and discrimination

HIV: LET'S GET TALKING

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