

Respect & protect : together we can stop the spread of HIV / NAT.

Contributors

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What is **HIV**?

HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) attacks the body's immune system, preventing it from fighting off diseases. When someone is diagnosed as having HIV in their body they are described as being HIV positive. Without treatment the immune system will eventually become too weak to fight off other illnesses, at this stage people are considered to have AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome). With treatment most people who are HIV positive will not develop AIDS.

How is **HIV** passed on?

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

- ▶ Through unprotected sex with someone living with HIV
- ▶ Sharing infected needles, syringes or injecting equipment
- ▶ From an HIV positive mother to her child during pregnancy, birth or breastfeeding

Oral sex carries a very low risk, but if cuts, ulcers or gum problems come into contact with infected bodily fluids HIV could be passed on.

You cannot get **HIV** from:

- ▶ Kissing or touching
- ▶ Biting, spitting, coughing or sneezing
- ▶ Toilet seats, swimming pools or shared utensils

How can I protect myself and others from **HIV**?

No matter what your HIV status is, **respecting** and **protecting** yourself is key in looking after yourself and others.

- ▶ Use a condom during sex. Using a condom during vaginal or anal sex is the best way to protect yourself and your partner from HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- ▶ Never share injecting equipment with other people
- ▶ If you are living with HIV and want to be a mother, speak to your HIV consultant about steps you can take to significantly reduce the risk of your child contracting HIV during pregnancy and birth
- ▶ Remember a treatment called PEP is available from sexual health clinics and Accident and Emergency departments which, if started within 72 hours of exposure to HIV, can reduce the possibility of becoming infected. Find out more at www.tht.org.uk/pep

Where else can I find more information and advice about **HIV**?

Visit www.worldAIDSday.org to find out more facts and information about HIV

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

To find out more about PEP visit www.tht.org.uk/pep

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 charity on HIV.

All our work is focused on achieving four strategic goals:

- ▶ Effective HIV prevention in order to halt the spread of HIV
- ▶ 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

RESPECT PROTECT



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Together we can stop
the spread of **HIV**



RESPECT PROTECT



RESPECT & PROTECT

Together we can stop the spread of **HIV** and end **HIV** prejudice

More people than ever before are living with HIV in the UK and new infections continue.

HIV is a serious long-term condition and people living with HIV often face discrimination. Whatever your HIV status, there is a role you can play in ending HIV prejudice and stopping the spread of HIV.

Who is affected by HIV?

Anyone who is sexually active or uses injecting equipment is at risk of getting or passing on HIV. There are over 80,000 people living with HIV in the UK, with around 7,000 new infections every year.

In the UK, some communities have higher rates of infection, particularly gay and bisexual men and Black African men and women.

More heterosexual people than gay men were diagnosed with HIV in 2007; more than 1 in 10 new diagnoses were among young people; and 5 per cent of people diagnosed were over 55.

It is not only those people living with the virus that are affected by it. Friends, family, children, partners – anyone close to someone living with HIV can be affected, not only by the effects on the health of the person living with the virus, but also by the prejudice that surrounds HIV.

How do I know if someone is HIV positive?

You generally cannot tell if someone is living with HIV. There may not be any outward signs. If someone is diagnosed early and receives treatment they can live a long life, work, exercise, socialise, have relationships and have families.

Some people do not know that they are HIV positive. It is estimated that over 24,000 people in the UK are unaware they have HIV because they haven't been tested.

What is it like to live with HIV?

There is no cure for HIV, but effective treatment is available in the UK. This often requires taking a number of tablets at certain times of the day. The treatment regime must be strictly followed, and side effects can include nausea, diarrhoea and prolonged headaches. In some cases the treatment causes changes in body shape, depression and mental health issues.

Prejudice also has a major impact on the lives of many people living with HIV and can affect self confidence, quality of life and mental health.

People living with HIV also face travel restrictions when going to certain countries.

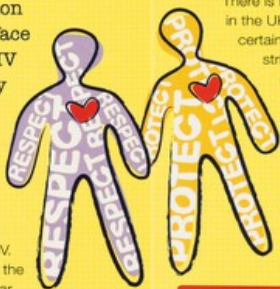
Why is there prejudice around HIV?

Many myths exist about HIV and how it is transmitted. A recent survey found 90 per cent of people in the UK do not know all the ways HIV can and cannot be passed on. Ignorance about how HIV is passed on and an unfounded fear of becoming infected is often what causes HIV prejudice.

Many of the groups most affected by HIV in the UK, such as gay or bisexual men, Black Africans and asylum seekers, already experience discrimination from society. Sadly fear and misunderstanding about HIV can increase prejudice towards these groups.

How are people living with HIV discriminated against?

One in three people diagnosed with HIV have experienced HIV-related discrimination at some time. Prejudice can take the form of bullying or discrimination at school or in the workplace, rejection by family and friends, stigmatising reports in the media, verbal abuse, victimisation or even assault. People living with HIV sometimes do not tell others about their status as they fear they will be rejected, or they will lose their job or home.



What can I do to Respect & Protect?

Know the facts about HIV – understanding the effects of HIV and how it is transmitted will help you protect yourself and others from HIV infection, and will help overcome the ignorance that causes prejudice.

Find out the facts about HIV at www.worldAIDSday.org

Be aware of your HIV status – knowing your HIV status is the first step in protecting yourself and others. An HIV test is a simple blood test. Results can be available within hours. Rapid testing clinics offer results in 15 minutes. If you think you have put yourself at risk of infection it is important to take an HIV test as soon as possible.

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

Show how you Respect & Protect yourself and others:

- ▶ Talk to all new sexual partners about using condoms
- ▶ If someone tells you they are HIV positive, treat them with respect and don't tell others without their agreement
- ▶ Check your workplace has a robust policy which ensures people living with HIV are treated fairly
- ▶ Check your local school has a comprehensive sex and relationship education programme, and teaches young people about HIV
- ▶ Challenge inaccurate or discriminatory reporting of HIV in the media
- ▶ Wear a red ribbon as a symbol of your support for those affected by HIV
- ▶ Support an HIV charity through volunteering or regular donation
- ▶ Use the facts you know to educate others about HIV
- ▶ Please pass this leaflet on to someone else when you have finished with it



For more facts about HIV and ideas about how you can help stop the spread of HIV and end HIV prejudice, visit our website

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