

**AIDS and you : more people are dying of AIDS every month and they are not only gay men and drug users / Health Education Authority.**

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HEALTH EDUCATION AUTHORITY

# AIDS AND YOU

More people are dying of AIDS every month and they are not only gay men and drug users. This leaflet tells you how to protect yourself.



# AIDS AND SEX



virus from sex.

The virus that causes AIDS is found in the fluids exchanged during sexual intercourse (men's semen and women's genital fluids). It is not only homosexual/gay men who catch the

## How to protect yourself

### Avoid sleeping around

The more people you have sex with, the more you are likely to meet someone with HIV (the virus that causes AIDS) and become infected. You are also more likely to catch other infections like gonorrhea, herpes, thrush and hepatitis B and to pass them on to those you love.

### Use a condom to avoid infection

A condom can help stop the virus – and other sexually transmitted diseases – passing from one person to another. But it must be used properly.

- Unroll the condom on to the penis when it is hard.
- Make sure this is done before any intercourse takes place.
- Remember to squeeze the closed end of the condom before it is put on. Otherwise it may break.
- After sex, take it off carefully to avoid spilling any semen.

### Think carefully about your sex life

Some kinds of sex appear to be more risky than others. Especially anal intercourse (where the penis enters the anus or back passage). Even oral sex (where one partner stimulates the other's sexual parts with the mouth) may carry a small risk if you have cuts or sore places in your mouth or sexual parts.

# AIDS AND DRUGS

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If you inject drugs, and share a needle or other equipment with an infected person, the virus (which lives in their bloodstream) may be passed on to you.

## How to protect yourself

The easiest way to avoid getting the virus in this way is not to inject drugs. Keep away from them yourself and encourage others to do the same. But if you do inject, always use your own set of works. Never share with anybody, even if they look perfectly healthy.

# AIDS AND BLOOD

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Any device that punctures the skin, including tattooing and acupuncture needles and equipment for ear-piercing or removing hair by electrolysis, could pass on the virus. It will normally be sterilised – but ask to make sure.

## Blood donations

If you donate blood to the National Blood Transfusion Service you will not pick up the virus because a new needle is used for each donor. If you receive blood in the United Kingdom it will have been screened already for HIV. Blood supplies in some countries, however, are not screened.

# HOW YOU **CAN'T** --- **GET AIDS**



Normal everyday contact with someone who has AIDS or HIV is perfectly safe. Even ordinary kissing is not thought to pass on the virus. There is no risk from touching: e.g. shaking hands with or hugging an infected person, or from sharing cups, glasses, knives and forks or any food and drink. Toilet seats, baths, towels and door knobs will not pass on the virus.

And it cannot be spread, like the common cold, by sneezing or coughing.

Swimming pools are safe, too.

You won't get the virus from mosquito bites, or from any other insects and animals.

## **Do you know someone with AIDS?**

People with AIDS and HIV can feel depressed, afraid and lonely. Some have been physically attacked, driven away from their homes, and treated like outcasts.

So don't break up a friendship because someone you know has AIDS or HIV – there's no need. Friendship and support are the most important things you have to offer.

**You won't get AIDS by being a friend.**

# WHAT IS AIDS?



AIDS is a condition caused by a virus, called HIV, which can damage the body's defence system so that it cannot fight infection. Some people may have this

virus without developing AIDS. They feel perfectly well, but they can still infect others.

The virus is called human immunodeficiency virus, or HIV. People may not even know they carry HIV and you cannot tell from looking at them if they are infected.

There is no cure for AIDS and no vaccine. Most people with AIDS die within a year or two from illnesses such as skin cancer or pneumonia which their bodies are too weak to resist.

At the end of 1987 we believe that about 50,000 people in the United Kingdom were carrying the virus. Over 1200 had developed AIDS itself, and 697 people had died.

Most people who have become ill in the UK with AIDS have been homosexual/gay men. But we are seeing new cases every month of women, and men who are not gay.

In many countries there are as many women with AIDS as men. To stop AIDS spreading here everyone must take care.

## National AIDS helplines

If you are worried about AIDS and would like to talk to a trained advisor, call

**0800 567 123**

If you would like to order free booklets, call

**0800 555 777**

These services are free and confidential,  
24 hours a day.