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Contributors

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SPECIAL PROGRAMME ON AIDS STATEMENT¹

TRANSMISSION OF HIV

Epidemiological studies in Europe, the Americas, Africa and Australia repeatedly have documented only three modes of HIV transmission:

- 1) Sexual intercourse (heterosexual or homosexual);
- 2) Contact with blood, blood products, or donated organs and semen. The vast majority of contacts with blood involve transfusion of unscreened blood or the use of unsterilized syringes and needles by IV drug abusers or in other settings;
- 3) Mother to child - mostly before, and perhaps during or shortly after birth (perinatal transmission).

There is no evidence to suggest that HIV can be transmitted by the respiratory or enteric routes or by casual, person to person, contact in any setting, including household, social, work, school or prison settings.

Epidemiological and laboratory studies have established that of the "body fluids", transmission seems limited to blood, semen, and vaginal/cervical secretions. Kissing has not been documented to pose a risk of HIV transmission. While unproven, some theoretical risk from vigorous "wet" kissing (deep kissing or tongue kissing) may exist.

There is no evidence to suggest that HIV transmission involves insects, food, water, toilets, swimming pools, sweat, tears, shared eating and drinking utensils or other items such as second-hand clothing or telephones.

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¹ Statement from Third Meeting of the WHO Collaborating Centres on AIDS held in Washington, D.C., 6 June 1987.

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