

HIV & STD prevention after 50 / written by Marcia Quackenbush.

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Transfusions Are Safe

- Before 1985, some people got HIV from blood transfusions.
- Today, donated blood is tested for HIV. Transfusions are very safe.
- There is no HIV risk from *donating* blood.

To Learn More

The CDC National STD and AIDS Hotlines

800-342-AIDS (or 342-2437)

Spanish: 800-344-SIDA (or 344-7432)

Deaf Access: 800-243-7889 (TTD/TTY)

This brochure is not intended as a substitute for your health professional's opinion or care.

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HIV & STD Prevention After 50



Could HIV Happen to Me?

Yes! People over 50 have sex.

Some use injection drugs. These behaviors put *anyone* at risk for HIV and other STD (sexually transmitted disease).

The Basic Facts

HIV or other STD can be passed when people have sex without a condom. (This includes vaginal, oral and anal sex.)

HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C can be passed by sharing needles for any reason. This includes injecting drugs, injecting prescribed medications, tattoos or piercing.

Herpes, genital warts or scabies can be passed through intimate skin-to-skin contact, especially contact with the genitals.

Since the beginning of the HIV epidemic, around

10%

of people with HIV have been

**50
or older.**

How to Stay Safe

1. Don't share needles. Ever.

2. Make one of these choices about sex:

- **Don't** have sex.
- **Have sex with only one partner** who absolutely has sex only with you.
You must both be free of HIV and other STD at the start of your relationship.
You must never share needles with each other or anyone else.
- **Use a latex condom every time** you have sex. For oral sex on a woman, try using plastic food wrap, a latex dental dam, or a condom cut the long way so it lies flat.

Should You Get Tested?

This can be a hard decision. But early diagnosis of any STD, including HIV, is important.

Treatments are usually easier and more effective early on. And you can avoid passing the disease to someone else.

Consider testing if:

- You have had sex with more than one person.
- You have had sex with someone who has had other sexual partners.
- You have had sex with someone who has used injection drugs or shared needles for any other purpose.
- You have shared needles.

Talk to your doctor or an HIV/STD counselor if you're not sure about testing.

Many areas have free or low-cost testing. Call your local health department to find out about testing in your area.

Respect yourself and your partner.

Talk about HIV and STD.
Make choices that are right for you, and stick with them.

Ways to Bring It Up

There are lots of good ways to start a discussion about HIV and other STD.

Here are some ideas:

- **The movies.** "I saw lots of sex in that movie, but not a single condom. What were those people thinking?"
- **Popular magazines.** "Here's another article about being sexy after 50. It's got a section on how sexy condoms are."
- **Books.** "A character in this book I'm reading has HIV. Sometimes I wonder how we'd feel if it happened in our family."

How Can I Know?

- You can't tell by looking whether a partner has HIV or STD.
- Asking doesn't always work. Some people don't know. Some people aren't honest. They may be embarrassed or fear being rejected or judged.
- You and your partner can take tests to show if you have HIV or other STD.

Sex over 50

People over 50 have some special concerns when it comes to keeping sex safe.

- **Vaginal dryness, thin walls.** Women can use water-based lubricants during sex to prevent tears or bruises in the vagina. This lowers the risk of HIV or STD.
- **Erections with attitude.** Sometimes putting on a condom makes an erect penis drop. More foreplay (partners love it), playful practice (try using a condom while you masturbate) and willingness to try again can help.

Smart, Safer Sex

- **Use latex condoms.** Don't use natural skin condoms. They don't prevent disease.
- **Use water-based lubricants only.** Oil-based lubes such as hand cream or Vaseline can make condoms break.
- **People who are allergic to latex** can use plastic condoms. Some couples use the "female" style.

Use condoms!

It may be hard to get into the mindset of using condoms when you don't have to worry about birth control. But it's really important.

Watch Out for Myths!

MYTH	TRUTH
Only young people get HIV.	People of <i>any</i> age can get HIV.
STD is easy to cure. HIV can be treated. They aren't that serious.	STD and HIV are serious. They can be hard to treat. Treatments can make people feel sick. People can die of HIV.
HIV isn't an issue for older people. They'll probably die of something else before HIV can make them sick.	Some people get sick from HIV very quickly. Older adults tend to get sick sooner than younger adults.
Only strangers have HIV.	Most people over 50 who get HIV through sex knew their partners.