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Community

MAININERS

IS TO THE WORKS

Number 1

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USING and HIV



HOW DO PEOPLE GET INFECTED WITH HIV?

It's very difficult to get infected with HIV, because the virus has to come into direct contact with your blood stream.

You can't 'catch' the virus, like you can catch 'flu or a cold from someone who's already got one. HIV isn't spread by ordinary everyday contact with other people.

You have to get an infected person's body fluids into your blood. When you're fixing or having sex you can come into contact with other people's blood, semen and vaginal fluids.

HOW CAN YOU PROTECT YOURSELF FROM HIV?

A lot of people think HIV and AIDS have nothing to do with them. But you can't tell if someone's infected just by looking at them. Many people who are infected with HIV feel and look perfectly well. So it's possible for the virus to be passed on, without anyone realising until it's too late.

And even if someone says they've had an AIDS test, it's still not safe.

You know it takes six months or more for the antibodies to HIV to show up so a single test result means nothing and unless that person has run no risks since a negative test.

That means we all have to assume that everyone else is infected with HIV and that we have to make sure that – whatever we're doing – we don't swap body fluids with anyone else.

You can do your best to ensure you don't share any one else's body fluids by remembering that sharing equipment and having unprotected sex are the two ways most likely to get you infected.

SAFER FIXING

Anyone who fixes and who shares equipment with other people is taking a big risk. They could be injecting the virus straight into their bloodstream – the most direct route of transmission.

Follow some basic steps and you'll help yourself

stay protected from getting infected with HIV – as well as other viruses, like Hepatitis B.

- Never share syringes or needles with anyone else – no matter how well you know them and no matter how close to you they are.
- Use your own spoon – and filter.
- Use clean water which you're sure no-one else has used. Better still use sterile water from a needle exchange.
- Never lend your equipment to anyone – even your best friend.
- Keep your works in a safe place, where no-one else can borrow them.
- Use new works whenever you can.

There are more and more places where you can get clean needles and syringes. Confidential needle exchanges and some chemists' shops will give them to you free. Other chemists will sell them to you. In an emergency – and only in an emergency – if you have to share someone else's equipment, you can cut the risks of your getting – or passing on – HIV by cleaning the equipment well.

To be as safe as you can make it when you're using someone else's works, flush the equipment twice with thin bleach and clean water. See the back page for full details of how to do it.

Get rid of used works carefully. Put the needle inside the barrel – or back into the plastic cap. Then put the whole lot into something like a ring-pull can, a screw-top jar or bottle before you throw it away.

If you're using a needle exchange, you may have to hang onto your used works to swap them for new – so keep them safe and out of reach. Some needle exchanges provide bins for used sharps.

SAFER SEX

HIV isn't present only in blood. It's in other body fluids, too – like semen and vaginal fluids.

So sex is another way of passing on the virus from one person to another.

That means anyone who has an active sex life is at risk: women and men, gay and straight.

You can cut that risk by following these easy steps:

- Always use a condom. It helps to use one that's labelled as being strong. Look for the British Standards 'kitemark' on the pack
- Always use a water based lubricant – like KY jelly – to cut down the amount of wear and tear on the condom. There are a number of brands of jelly on sale in most chemists. Never use a petroleum jelly – like Vaseline – because it will rot holes in the condom – and that means you're unprotected.
- Don't share sex toys – use your own.
- You don't have to have penetrative sex. There are other ways of having sex which are a lot safer – and more fun. See our leaflet number 4, *Safer Sex*. It doesn't matter how you got stoned - if it makes you careless about how a man puts a condom on before you have sex or about the lubricant you use, you'll be at risk, whatever you tell yourself about taking precautions.

Even if you're stoned – or if you've been drinking – you've got to stick to safer sex, even if a condom is the last thing on your mind. You need to have unprotected sex just once to get infected.

If you're having sex with a man, put the condom on him yourself. That way you'll be sure it's on properly – after all it's your body that's at risk. You can make it an enjoyable experience for him.

WHAT IF YOU'VE SHARED WORKS IN THE PAST?

Just because you've done something unwise in the past, you haven't got to keep on doing it.

You may not have been exposed to the virus last time – and even if you were, and if you're antibody positive to HIV now, using new works or cleaning old ones, will cut the chance of your getting infections, such as Hepatitis B, into your bloodstream.

This leaflet can't give you answers to all the questions you've got about HIV and AIDS and how they affect you. If you want to know more look for the rest of the leaflets in this series or contact one of the organisations in our listings.

LONDON & NATIONAL GROUPS AND SERVICES

Afro Caribbean Helpline Service: Black advisers, specialist advice and support. Fri, 6pm–10pm on National AIDS Helpline (0800 567 123). Calls free
CLASH (Central London Action on Street Health): Young people's advice and support on anything to do with health. Write: c/o Soho Hospital, Soho Square, London W1. Phone 071–734 1794 Mo-Fr, 10am–5pm.

Dentists who treat people who have HIV infection and people who have AIDS: NHS Special Needs Clinic, Alderney Street, London SW1. Phone: 071–630 8436 Mo, 3pm–5pm; Tu, We, 9am–12noon

Frontliners: Mutual help and support group for people who have AIDS. Write: 55 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3JB. Phone: 071–430 1199 Mon-Fr, 10am–6pm

Immunity's Legal Centre: Free full-time specialist legal centre for anyone with legal problems caused by HIV infection, AIDS or a condition connected with HIV or AIDS. Will-making, advice and civil court and industrial tribunal representation. Centre's staff can visit. Appointment necessary. Write: 260A Kilburn Lane, London W10 4BA. Phone: 081–968 8909 Mo-Fr, 10am–5pm.

The Landmark: Day centre for people who have HIV infection and people who have AIDS. Offers meals, recreational facilities – Mo and Th 10am–9pm, Tu and Fr 10am–5pm, We 10am–7pm – women-only evening – We, 7pm–9pm – and advice sessions. Plus info for other people. Write or drop in: 47a Tulse Hill, London SW2. Phone: 081–671 7611

London Lighthouse: Hospice and drop-in centre. Counselling, health advice, support at home, breaks for carers, terminal care and advice sessions. Write: 111 Lancaster Road, London W11 1QT. Phone: 071–792 1200

Mainliners: Self-help and support group for users and ex-users. Safer sex and safer using info. Write: PO Box 125, London SW9 8EF. Phone: 071–274 4000 extension 443. Mo-Fr, 10am–5pm

Mildmay Mission Hospital: Convalescence, respite and terminal care. Day care and 24-hour call-out home care service, covering City and East London. Mother and baby rooms and Frontliners drop-in office. Write: Hackney Road, London E2 7NA. Phone: 071–729 2331

National AIDS Helplines: Phone: – free of charge – for free leaflets on HIV infection and AIDS, 0800 555 777. For confidential advice: 0800 567 123. 24hrs

Positively Women: Advice and support for and from women who have HIV infection, AIDS or a condition connected with HIV infection and AIDS. Meets in central London. Write: 5 Sebastian Street London EC1V 0HE. Phone: 071–490 5515 Mo-Fr, 10am–4.30pm

Positive Partners: Self-help support for partners affected by HIV. Write: c/o 10 Rathbone Place, London W1P 1DE. Phone: 071–249 6068

Præd Street Project: Research project also offers free STD and general women's health service for prostitutes. Contact: c/o Jefferies Wing, St Mary's Hospital, London W2 1NY. Phone: 01–725 1549/6486. Mo-Fr, 9am–5pm. Open afternoon We, 1pm–5pm. Visits by appointment Tu, 10am–5pm; We, 1pm–5pm

Release: Advice and information on drug-related problems – including legal problems. Write: 169 Commercial Street, London E1 6BW. Phone: 071–377 5905 Mo-Fr, 10am–6pm or (emergencies only) 071–603 8654

Rape Crisis Centre: Physical protection, emotional support. Write: PO Box 69, London WC1. Phone: 071–837 1600. 24hrs

SCODA: Information officer keeps up-to-date list of syringe exchanges. Write: 1–4 Hatton Place, London EC1N 8RU. Phone: 071–430 2341/3

Terrence Higgins Trust: Information about and counselling over HIV infection and AIDS. Support groups and volunteers to help people who have HIV infection and people who have AIDS. Write: 52–54 Grays Inn Road, London WC1N 8JU. Phone: 071–831 0330 (admin only). Helpline: 071–242 1010 Daily, 3pm–10pm

CLEAN EQUIPMENT IN LONDON The Caravan Needle Exchange,

South Wharf Road, W2. Tube: Paddington. Phone: 071–725 1418

Cleveland Street Needle Exchange, 60A Cleveland Street, W1. Tube: Goodge Street. Phone: 071–631 1750

For information about other projects, call SCODA on 071–430 2341

LONDON LEGAL ADVICE

Release, 169 Commercial Road, E1. Phone: 071–377 5905 or 071–603 8564 (24 hours for emergencies only). For drug related legal problems

Immunity's Legal Centre, 260A Kilburn Lane, W10. Phone: 081–968 8909. For HIV and AIDS-related legal problems. Appointment necessary for visits.

CENTRAL LONDON DDU's

St Mary's Hospital, 16 South Wharf Road, W2. Tube: Paddington. Phone: 071–725 6485/6486.

Charing Cross Hospital, 57 Aspenlea Road, W6. Tube: Hammersmith. Phone: 081–846 1538

St Clements, 2A Bow Road, E3. Tube: Mile End or Bow Road. Phone: 071–377 7975 (071–377 7951 for HIV counsellor)

St Mary Abbots, Marloes Road, W8. Tube: Kensington High Street. Phone: 081–846 6117

University College Hospital, National Temperance Hospital, 122 Hampstead Road, NW1. Phone: 071–387 9451/9452/9453

LONDON RESIDENTIAL SERVICE

City Roads (crisis intervention), 356–358 City Road, EC1. Phone: 071–278 8671/2

WHAT IS AIDS?

AIDS stands for the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. It damages your immune system, which protects you from infections and disease.

WHAT CAUSES AIDS?

Most experts agree a virus called the Human Immunodeficiency Virus - HIV, for short - is probably linked to AIDS. When someone gets infected with HIV, the virus infects some of the cells in their immune system. No-one knows how many people who get infected with the virus will develop AIDS.

HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOU'VE GOT AIDS?

There is no AIDS test. Doctors who want to check whether someone has AIDS look for symptoms of some of the illnesses associated with the syndrome.

There is a test for HIV. But the test that's usually done is for the antibodies your immune system produces to fight it. If you've got the antibodies you're 'antibody positive to HIV' or 'HIV positive'.

Antibodies don't appear immediately you get infected. So a test is useless unless it's done at least six months after you were exposed to the virus.

IN EMERGENCIES CLEAN USED WORKS WITH CARE

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1. Draw up thin household bleach



2. Flush out bleach down the drain



3. Draw up bleach again



4. Flush bleach down drain again



5. Draw up clean water



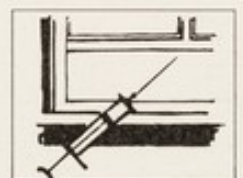
6. Flush water down the drain



7. Draw up clean water



8. Flush water down drain again



9. Check works in the light

10. Go back to No. 1 and repeat the process. The second time you check your works in the light be careful, check everywhere for traces of blood



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