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T +44 (0)20 7611 8722
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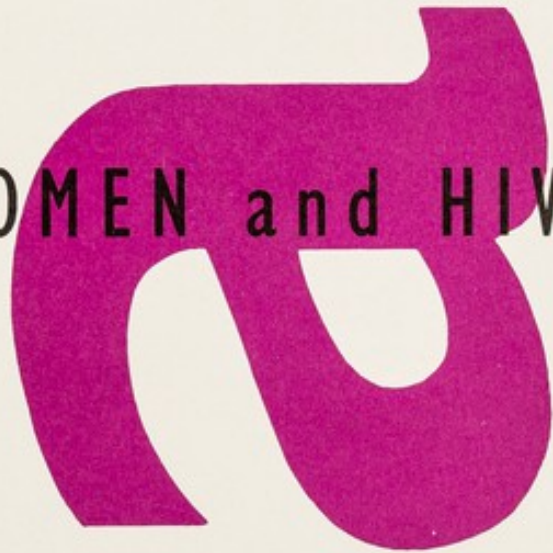
MAIN INERS

IS TO THE WORKS

Number 2

ISSN 0961-1045

WOMEN and HIV



The number of women who are antibody positive to HIV is growing rapidly – in fact, they make up the fastest growing group of people who are HIV antibody positive.

Antibody positive means the women tested have developed antibodies to HIV, the virus which probably plays a part in causing AIDS.

Not everyone with antibodies to HIV in their blood will develop AIDS, but it's safe to say that most people - in the UK, anyway - who develop AIDS have antibodies to HIV in their blood.

It's not who you are that counts – it's what you do. No-one is immune to HIV.

Research shows that it's easier for women to get infected from men than the other way around. And many more women drug users share their works than men.

That means many women are at risk of getting infected with HIV. And if you've ever had thrush, herpes, cystitis, genital warts, chlamydia or trichomoniasis, you may well be more at risk than other women, because any sexually transmitted disease is evidence of the fact that you've taken risks you could have avoided.

But don't let that put you off going to an STD clinic for a full check up – some of those conditions can lead to far worse conditions, like cervical cancer and infertility. In short, you should have a regular check-up at a clinic.

HOW DO YOU GET INFECTED WITH HIV?

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

The truth is it's very difficult to get infected. If you're fully informed about the virus, it's really easy to avoid.

There are three main ways of getting infected with HIV:

- Unprotected sex – this applied to everyone, gay or straight. See our leaflet No. 4, *Safer Sex*. Getting infected through sex is easier if you're stoned.

- Sharing needles, syringes and other equipment – water, filters, spoons and so on – when injecting drugs. See our leaflet No. 1, *Using and HIV*.
- From an infected mother to her child. Not all mothers who are infected with HIV will give birth to children who are antibody positive to HIV or who develop AIDS – but it can happen. See our leaflet No. 5, *Motherhood and HIV*.

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.

That's why it's so easy for people who don't even know they're antibody positive to HIV to pass on the virus.

Don't think about 'safe' partners, think about safer behaviour.

STAYING SAFE

Anyone who has an active sex life is at risk of becoming infected with HIV, because the virus is present in semen and vaginal fluids and can be passed from one person to their partner during sex.

You can get detailed information on how to cut down the risks involved in sex. See our leaflet No. 4.

This leaflet aims at giving you the basic facts which you need to know. The main thing to remember is not to exchange body fluids.

Obviously if you don't have penetrative sex - anal, vaginal or oral - you'll have cut the risks greatly.

But, if you do have penetrative heterosexual sex, make sure your partner uses a condom – and make sure he uses it properly. A badly used condom is no protection at all.

- Use a condom that's labelled as strong. Look for the British Standards 'kitemark' on the pack.
- Use a water based lubricant gel – like KY jelly – and use plenty of it.
- Never use a petroleum jelly – like Vaseline as a lubricant. These jellies rot condoms surprisingly fast.

- Avoid oral sex if you've got cuts or sores in your mouth or if your gums bleed at all. If a man cums in your mouth, get the cum out of your mouth at once. Spit it out — or swallow it — immediately.
- Avoid using enemas or douches — they can scratch you inside and make it easier to get infected.
- Remember lesbian sex isn't a guarantee against infection with HIV. Oral sex can still be risky if you've got cuts or sores in your mouth or your gums are bleeding. Menstrual blood from a woman who has become infected with HIV will contain the virus.

IT'S YOUR BODY — IT'S YOUR CHOICE

Many women are used to taking the responsibility for contraception, but but they're not comfortable talking about HIV or protecting themselves.

Sex can be one of the hardest things to talk about — even if you've been with your partner for a long time. It's harder still when you realise you're only as safe as the last person your partner had sex with. It's easiest to sort out what you want at the beginning of a new relationship.

It's up to you both to discuss your sexual relationship and to decide how you are going to limit the risks to each other. No penetrative sex is really safe — it's up to you to decide what you're comfortable with.

THE DIFFICULT BIT

Even if you're stoned — or if you've had a drink or two — 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 another woman, remember that doesn't make you immune to HIV.

The blood and vaginal fluids of a woman who's infected contain the virus. Safer sex is for you, too.

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. And you can make it an enjoyable experience.

Remember, there's no morning-after pill you can take to get rid of HIV.

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. Plus day care and 24-hour call-out home care service, covering City and East London. Has 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

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

Praed 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 and 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: Goadge 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. Phone 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



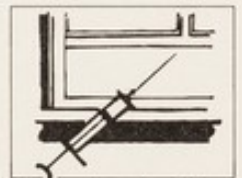
6. Flush water down the drain



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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