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Contributors

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HIV & AIDS

INFORMATION
FOR GAY MEN



The Terrence Higgins Trust



AVOIDING THE RISKS THROUGH SAFER SEX

You can't tell who's got HIV (the virus that can lead to AIDS) from their appearance or attitude. We've got no way of knowing which of our sexual partners may or may not have HIV infection. So the safest option is for each of us to stick to safer sex with everyone. This'll protect both us and them from not only HIV but also other sexually transmitted diseases.

In the past, when we knew less than we do now, our advice used to be extra cautious: and safer sex may have seemed complicated and no fun.

In fact, all you have to remember is this:

For all practical purposes the virus can only be transmitted through infected blood, cum (men's semen) and women's vaginal juices.

(You may be worried about other body fluids like saliva or spit, but the crucial thing to remember is that HIV can only be found in these in very small amounts which aren't enough to be infectious. Worldwide studies of many thousands of people show that there's no evidence that anyone can get infected through kissing, for instance.)

Fortunately, HIV can't get through ordinary, healthy, undamaged skin.

This means that, basically, as an adult, you can only get HIV in three ways:

- By getting infected blood directly into your body through shared needles
- By getting blood, cum or vaginal juices directly into your body through a wound or cut
- By getting blood, cum or vaginal juices directly into your body through sensitive linings in the bum or up the urethra, which is the tube inside your cock.

Bearing all this in mind, safer sex is quite straightforward.

THE MAIN RISK

In sex, by far and away the main risk of transmitting HIV is through fucking or being fucked.

If this is what you find essential for your sexual satisfaction, then you need to think carefully about reducing the risk. There are two ways you could do this.

- Many men find that they can get the same sort of pleasure involving the bum by using sex toys like dildos or buttplugs to play with. There's no risk of transmitting HIV unless you share sex toys that go inside you. The best advice is to keep all such sex toys for the exclusive use of one person only.
- Alternatively, you can really cut down the risk by learning how to use condoms. Research has shown that the virus can't get through a good quality, undamaged condom. But it's vital to learn how to use condoms properly otherwise they won't protect you at all. For instance, you must use a water-based lubricant such as 'KY', 'ForPlay' etc. because oil-based lubricants (such as 'Vaseline', baby oil, handcreams, 'Crisco', cooking oil, butter etc.) will disastrously weaken a condom within minutes!

If you have penetrative sex with a woman, infected cum may be absorbed through her vaginal or anal linings – so always wear a condom.

ORAL SEX

It is absolutely clear that sucking is much safer than fucking. But we can't give you a 100% safety go-ahead about oral sex (sucking cock, or licking inside a woman's vagina).

There's no conclusive evidence that anyone's been infected through oral sex, but there are a few people who claim that this is how they must have been infected. Oral sex hasn't shown up as a risk factor in studies to date, but there may be a higher risk if there are cuts or sores in the mouth.

So there may be a very low risk from sucking. If you decide to be extra cautious, you could put a condom on his cock before sucking, or you might get a very similar pleasure from licking and nuzzling around the cock and balls, without taking the end in your mouth; or you might agree to stop sucking before taking any cum or pre-cum in the mouth.

YOU CAN STILL DO ALMOST EVERYTHING ELSE THAT TURNS YOU ON, SAFELY

With a bit of commonsense everything else that makes sex so enjoyable is still just as available as it ever was.

Whatever your turn-on, whatever your fantasies, there's no risk of HIV transmission from:

- kissing and licking all over the body
- wanking each other
- soft, sensual massage
- hugging and touching, caressing...
- tickling, nibbling, lovebiting
- fun with pictures and mirrors, and watching each other
- fantasies with clothes: underwear, sports-gear, leather, rubber, cross-dressing, work-gear, ripped jeans, jockstraps, socks, boots...
- wrestling or rough and tumble
- role playing, talking 'dirty'
- your imagination...

Generally, the only precautions you need to take are commonsense ones: avoid cutting the skin, but if you do, make sure you don't get blood or cum in the wound. And don't share any sex toys that go inside the body.

ABOVE ALL, ENJOY YOURSELF SAFELY!

TALK TO THE TERRENCE HIGGINS TRUST HELPLINE – THAT'S WHAT WE'RE HERE FOR

Obviously, in the space available, this is just a brief guide to basic safer sex. There's a lot more to talk about.

Phone our Helpline to chat about any questions or concerns you may have. The volunteers on the line can fill in the details and tie up the loose ends. The number to call is 01-242 1010 (071-242 1010 from 6.5.90) and lines are open daily from 3pm-10pm.

Alternatively, you can write to The Terrence Higgins Trust at 52-54 Grays Inn Road, London WC1X 8JU. Please send a stamped (28p) self-addressed 9"x6" envelope.

Gay men with Haemophilia requiring further information may wish to call the Haemophilia Society on 01-928 2020 (071-928 2020 from 6.5.90) between 8.30am-5pm Monday-Friday.

Answerphones operate on both the above numbers when the lines are not staffed.

**REMEMBER: GAY MEN HAVE BEEN ASKED
NOT TO DONATE BLOOD OR SEMEN OR
CARRY AN ORGAN DONOR CARD.**



The Terrence Higgins Trust



*The Terrence Higgins Trust is a registered charity
which provides practical support, help, counselling
and advice for anyone with or concerned about AIDS or
HIV infection.*

THE TERRENCE HIGGINS TRUST

52-54 Grays Inn Road
London WC1X 8JU

Telephone: 01-831 0330 (071-831 0330 from 6.5.90)

Fax: 01-242 0121 (071-242 0121 from 6.5.90)

Charity reg. no. 288527
Company reg. no. 1778149
Registered in England

HELPLINE

01-242 1010

(071-242 1010 from 6.5.90)

3pm-10pm daily

LEGAL LINE

01-405 2381

(071-405 2381 from 6.5.90)

7pm-10pm every Wednesday

*The work of the Trust is mainly supported by voluntary
donations. If you feel this leaflet has been helpful, you
may care to send a donation to:*

**THE TERRENCE HIGGINS TRUST
52-54 GRAYS INN ROAD
LONDON WC1X 8JU**