

**AIDS : more facts for gay men : compiled with the help and advice of doctors : remember, the more men you have sex with, the greater your chance of getting AIDS : anal sex carries the highest risk / The Terrence Higgins Trust.**

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Terrence Higgins Trust

**Publication/Creation**

1986.

**Persistent URL**

<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/ax4fgwxt>

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# AIDS

## MORE FACTS FOR GAY MEN

*Compiled with the help and advice of doctors*

### Remember

The more men you have sex with, the greater your chance of getting AIDS.

Anal sex carries the highest risk.

DO NOT donate blood or semen.

DO NOT carry an organ donor card.

THE  
TERRENCE HIGGINS TRUST  
**HELPLINE**

**01-833 2971**

7-10PM MONDAY-FRIDAY  
3PM-10PM WEEKENDS

Our leaflet 'AIDS — The Facts' which you should also have been given or can get from the Trust, will tell you the basic facts about AIDS. As a gay or bisexual man you need to know more.

### **Safer Sex**

You risk catching HTLV III (the virus which may lead to AIDS) through having sex. We want to tell you how you can reduce this risk.

The virus is passed on when semen or blood from an infected person enters the body of an uninfected person. This happens most easily through the anus or cuts in the skin. There is possibly a small risk that saliva (spit) and urine could also be infectious, but this is much less likely.

The more people you have sex with, the more likely it is that at least one of them will be infected. Cutting down your number of sexual partners will reduce the number of risks you take.

We know that people who have had anal sex with more different partners have a higher chance of being infected. Using a condom (rubber, durex) will help *if* it stays together but they very often burst during gay sex. You can't rely on them, but if you are going to screw, you should use a condom and a water based lubricant (such as K-Y). It is safer to avoid anal intercourse unless you are sure that both you and your partner are uninfected, or you are involved in a long-term monogamous relationship.



While we know that anal sex is the highest risk activity, we have estimated the risk of other sex acts working from basic principles. The lower the risk category, the safer the sex!

#### RISK FREE SEX (no problems)

Solo masturbation (wanking) and fantasy  
Sexy talking  
Massage without masturbation  
Sex toys (like dildos) used by you and only by you

#### LOW RISK SEX (fairly safe)

Mutual masturbation (wanking together)  
'Dry' kissing (**almost** anywhere on the body)  
Sex toys used on another person — but **never** shared  
Bondage, spanking etc — but never break the skin  
Body rubbing — try warm oil!

#### MEDIUM RISK SEX (definitely less safe)

'Wet' (deep or French) kissing  
Putting fingers into the anus  
Cock sucking — it is probably even less safe if he (or you) comes. Spitting the semen out afterwards won't help.  
Water sports (pissing on someone). This will be more dangerous if it gets into the eyes, mouth or breaks in the skin.

#### HIGHER RISK SEX (positively dangerous)

Using someone else's dildo, butt plug etc. It's almost impossible to sterilise them reliably.  
Rimming (licking or tonguing someone's anus). There are several unpleasant infections you can catch this way.

Fisting (putting the fist or hand into someone else's rectum). You are almost certain to cause at least a little bit of dangerous bleeding.

#### HIGHEST RISK SEX (**known** to be very dangerous)

Anal sex (fucking, screwing). Read about condoms above.  
*Anything* which draws blood.

### **Is there a test for AIDS?**

Briefly — no.

There is a test available in clinics which will now tell you fairly reliably whether you have been infected with the HTLV III virus. We know however that only about one in ten people who are infected will develop AIDS. Some others will develop less severe illnesses but most will stay completely healthy. This test (the HTLV III antibody test) will **not** tell you whether you will become ill.

**BUT** people who get a positive test result will be very likely to be infectious and should **always** take precautions to avoid passing the infection on to others. For gay men this means safer sex.

If you don't have the test done, you must accept that there is a chance that you **could** be infectious to others. Again safer sex is the only safe way.

There are strong arguments both for and against having this test done. Many people find a positive result very hard to cope with, however strong they are. Read the Trust leaflet 'HTLV III Antibody; to test or not to test?', and discuss it with our helpline or your local AIDS phonenumber if you have doubts. Do this **before** you have the test done.

### **What if you have had sex with someone who develops AIDS?**

Your risk of illness is small. Talk to a doctor at a sexually transmitted disease (VD) clinic. If you are offered the HTLV III antibody test, don't decide straight away. Read the Trust leaflet or talk to the helpline (see the section on "Is there a test for AIDS?").



### **What if you are HTLV III Antibody Positive?**

**Firstly** and most importantly remember that you are most likely to stay entirely well.

You must accept though that you are very likely to be infectious to others if you have 'unsafe' sex with them. This means that they could eventually die because of it. Be responsible.

You will probably need a lot of support and information, both of which can be hard to come by at this critical time. The Terrence Higgins Trust exists to provide these and can also put you in touch with Body Positive, a support group of antibody positive men who have all been through the same problems.

Go back to the clinic which did your test. They should be prepared to help you with your problems. If not, ask us which ones will.

### **Why do only some Antibody Positive people get AIDS?**

We don't know for sure but there are some ideas.

1. As with all infections, some people are just born better able to fight this virus.
2. Some other infections such as syphilis, hepatitis and CMV may make the virus more active in the body.
3. Recreational drugs (including alcohol and tobacco) can lower your resistance to disease.
4. A balanced diet, rest and relaxation may assist your body to fight infection.
5. Having other men's semen inside your body may in itself reduce your ability to fight infection.

AIDS is a terrifying disease but with a little care and knowledge you can still enjoy sex and life and be sure of staying healthy. It's up to you.

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THE  
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*A registered charity to inform, advise and help on A.I.D.S. (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome).*  
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