

## **Women and AIDS / Health Education Authority.**

### **Contributors**

Health Education Authority (Great Britain)

### **Publication/Creation**

1990.

### **Persistent URL**

<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/jywzn6fw>

### **License and attribution**

Conditions of use: it is possible this item is protected by copyright and/or related rights. You are free to use this item in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s).



Wellcome Collection  
183 Euston Road  
London NW1 2BE UK  
T +44 (0)20 7611 8722  
E [library@wellcomecollection.org](mailto:library@wellcomecollection.org)  
<https://wellcomecollection.org>

# Women and AIDS

**What does AIDS mean for women?**

AIDS is caused by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

HIV can be spread through sexual intercourse and by sharing needles, syringes and mixing bowls for injecting drugs.

It can also pass from mother to child during pregnancy, if the mother has the virus.

Pick up a leaflet for more information.



FOR FREE AND CONFIDENTIAL ADVICE PHONE THE 24 HOUR NATIONAL AIDS HELPLINE ON 0800 567 123

WORLD AID DAY

Health Education Authority

**If I use drugs could I get HIV, the virus that causes AIDS?**

HIV is spread by sharing needles, syringes and other injecting equipment.

The virus can then be passed on through sexual intercourse.



HIV is the Human Immunodeficiency Virus

FOR FREE AND CONFIDENTIAL ADVICE PHONE THE 24 HOUR NATIONAL AIDS HELPLINE ON 0800 567 123

Health Education Authority

**Should I use a condom with my new partner?**

HIV, the virus which causes AIDS, can be spread through sexual intercourse.

A condom can help protect you so if you choose to have sex using one makes sense.

Talk about it with your partner beforehand. It may not be easy, but it is worth the effort.



HIV is the Human Immunodeficiency Virus


FOR FREE AND CONFIDENTIAL ADVICE PHONE THE 24 HOUR NATIONAL AIDS HELPLINE ON 0800 567 123

Health Education Authority

**Could my child become infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS?**

A mother who has the virus can pass this to her baby before or during birth, or sometimes by breastfeeding.

Playing, hugging and everyday contact with someone who has HIV is perfectly safe.



HIV is the Human Immunodeficiency Virus

FOR FREE AND CONFIDENTIAL ADVICE PHONE THE 24 HOUR NATIONAL AIDS HELPLINE ON 0800 567 123

Health Education Authority



Health  
Education  
Authority



This leaflet answers many of the questions women ask about how HIV and AIDS affects their health, sexual behaviour and their children.

It does not include full information about HIV and sexual health nor does it answer all questions that women may ask. The Health Education Authority leaflets *The facts about HIV and AIDS*, *Safer sex and the condom* and *HIV the test* give more details, or you could talk to one of the agencies listed at the back of this leaflet.

**Q** I think Steve my boyfriend once used drugs. Could he have HIV and what are the risks to me?

**A** If your boyfriend has ever shared drug injecting equipment then he might have HIV, the human immunodeficiency virus which causes AIDS. HIV can be passed by sharing needles, syringes, or any material used in injecting drugs and by sharing just once. There is no other way of passing on the virus through drug misuse but don't be pressurised into using them. Most drugs are illegal and can be dangerous in other ways so should be avoided.

Your boyfriend may have HIV even if he no longer uses drugs and you can't tell by appearance if someone is infected. The virus could then be passed on through sexual intercourse but condoms can help reduce the risk. It is important for you both to talk

## If I use drugs could I get HIV, the virus that causes AIDS?

HIV is spread by sharing needles, syringes and other injecting equipment.

The virus can then be passed on through sexual intercourse.



HIV is the Human Immunodeficiency Virus

FOR FREE AND CONFIDENTIAL  
ADVICE PHONE THE 24 HOUR  
NATIONAL AIDS HELPLINE ON  
**0800 567 123**



about HIV and AIDS so you can protect each other from infection. Showing him a leaflet like this might help to get the conversation started.

**Q** I met a nice boy at a party the other week but I have to keep pushing off his wandering hands. He wants to go all the way with me but I don't want to. I don't want to lose him but feel I can't keep saying no to him.

**A** Young people sometimes find themselves involved sexually before they feel ready. Alcohol and drugs can also make us feel less inhibited. Some girls become pregnant as a result and may regret it. We also need to think about protection against sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and HIV.

Have confidence in your own instincts and if you don't want to have sex it's right to say so. It is better to wait until you both feel ready for it and you are then more likely to enjoy it.

**Q** I can't bring up the subject of condoms with my new partner without getting embarrassed. I don't want him to think I'm easy.

**A** Sex, contraception and protection against disease are all very intimate subjects to discuss. It can be awkward talking about them with someone important in your life who you want to get closer to. These are all issues which will have occurred to him as well and you may find he'll be relieved if you raise the questions.

It may be better to pick a time before cuddling up together when you can discuss things coolly. Make it clear that you are not just thinking of yourself because condoms protect both of you, and more young people are seeing that it is responsible and caring to use them. You may feel less embarrassed if you talk things through first with a good friend or someone you trust.

**Q** Boys won't want to sleep with me if I insist they use condoms.

**A** If a new partner refuses to use a condom when you ask him can he really care about you? Some men and women feel condoms stop them enjoying sex but they need not. Used correctly they help prevent the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases as well as unwanted pregnancy, and they may help prevent cervical cancer.

## Should I use a condom with my new partner?

HIV, the virus which causes AIDS, can be spread through sexual intercourse.

A condom can help protect you so if you choose to have sex using one makes sense.

Talk about it with your partner beforehand. It may not be easy, but it is worth the effort.



FOR FREE AND CONFIDENTIAL  
ADVICE PHONE THE 24 HOUR  
NATIONAL AIDS HELPLINE ON  
**0800 567 123**



If you try to explain that it is to protect both of you and keep a healthy sexual relationship going he might change his mind. If he doesn't then it would be far better to find someone who is more considerate.

**Q** Is oral sex with a man or woman safe?

**A** Oral sex is thought to carry virtually no risk of HIV infection so long as you have no cuts or sores in your mouth. In theory there may be a greater risk from menstrual blood if a woman has HIV.

It is extremely unlikely that HIV could be passed through deep French kissing and there have been no proven cases of this happening. Safer sex doesn't just mean using a condom. Sex without penetration can be just as satisfying. Stroking, touching and massage are all perfectly safe. If you use sex toys, such as vibrators, it is important that you do not share them with each other.



**Q** Is my child at risk of AIDS from another child who is HIV antibody positive?

**A** There is no chance of HIV spreading through coughs, sneezes, swimming pools, toilet seats or sharing cups etc. It has never been passed from one person to another through normal day to day contact.

**Q** My ex-boyfriend and I split up last month. I now discover that I'm pregnant and have since learnt that he is HIV antibody positive.

**A** There are many self help groups that can help you with counselling and support in this difficult situation. They will give you information about having an HIV antibody test, which looks for antibodies that are produced if the body is infected with HIV. You can also get advice on the implications of a positive result for your health and that of your baby's. If you are diagnosed as HIV antibody positive seek advice from your doctor or the health adviser in your local health authority clinic.

If a woman has the virus it can be passed to her baby before or during birth, and sometimes by breast feeding but only one in four children born to mothers with HIV will be infected. Seek help as soon as possible so that you have plenty of time to decide what is best for you. Ring the helpline number 0800 567 123 which is free and open 24 hours a day. Or you could try telephoning any other number listed at the back of this leaflet for further help and advice.

### Could my child become infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS?

A mother who has the virus can pass this to her baby before or during birth, or sometimes by breastfeeding.

Playing, hugging and everyday contact with someone who has HIV is perfectly safe.



FOR FREE AND CONFIDENTIAL  
ADVICE PHONE THE 24 HOUR  
NATIONAL AIDS HELPLINE ON  
**0800 567 123**



**Q** When is the right time to talk about the facts of life with my children?

**A** Sexuality for young people is not just about avoiding pregnancy. Sex is a natural part of life and if parents can overcome embarrassment and talk about it with their children, first sexual experiences may be less problematic and young people will be able to make more informed decisions.

Generally speaking, when they are old enough to ask questions of their parents children are old enough to be given the answer. The very young don't need graphic details – just enough information to enable them to ask for more when they are ready. With teenagers it is important to discuss feelings and relationships as well as contraception, HIV, AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases. For more information you could contact the agencies listed at the back of this leaflet.

There are many questions that women may ask about HIV or AIDS such as:

Should my new partner or I have an HIV antibody test?

When should my partner and I stop using condoms?

Some women may be concerned about previous risk behaviour, bisexuality, risks while living or working abroad, or personal and family relationships affected by HIV or AIDS. This leaflet attempts to answer some concerns, but not all can easily be dealt with in this way. If you have any further worries or questions ring the National AIDS Helpline or any of the agencies listed on the back of this leaflet.

For more details about HIV and AIDS you can obtain the Health Education Authority leaflets *The facts about HIV and AIDS*, *Safer sex and the condom* and *HIV the test* from your local health education unit. The address should be in your telephone book under your local District Health Authority.

The Institute for the Study of Drug Dependence (ISDD) tel. 071 430 1991, has produced a book entitled *Women, drugs, HIV: Practical issues* which can be bought from good bookshops or ISDD.

Further information on HIV, AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases and sexual health can be obtained from your GP, local health promotion unit, family planning clinic or genito-urinary medicine clinic (GUM, STD, VD or 'special' clinic). The addresses should also be in your telephone book. Alternatively one of the organisations listed on the back of this leaflet can give fuller information on the points raised in this leaflet.

The HEA would like to thank Margaret Rooke, journalist and writer of articles on women's health, for helping to compile this leaflet.



National AIDS Helpline for free and confidential advice 24 hours a day  
Tel: 0800 567 123.

Minicom: 0800 521 361 Daily 10am-10pm  
For people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

The National AIDS Helpline is also staffed with people who speak:

- Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu and English on Wednesdays 6pm-10pm 0800 282 445
- Chinese (Cantonese) and English on Tuesdays 6pm-10pm 0800 282 446
- Arabic and English on Wednesdays 6pm-10pm 0800 282 447

There is a leaflet ordering service for leaflets in all the above languages available at these times and an answerphone service at other times.

■ Family Planning Association  
27-35 Mortimer Street  
London  
WIN 7RJ  
Tel: 071 636 7866

■ Terrence Higgins Trust  
52-54 Grays Inn Road  
London  
EC1  
Tel: 071 242 1010

■ Women's Health and Reproductive Rights Information Centre (WHRRIC)  
52 Featherstone Street  
London  
EC1Y 8RT  
Tel: 071 251 6580

■ Black HIV/AIDS Network (BHAN)  
BCN BHAN  
London  
WC1N 3XX  
Tel: 071 485 6756

■ Body Positive Women's Group  
Shoreditch House  
239 Old Street  
London EC1V 9EY  
Tel: 071 490 1225

■ Brook Advisory Centres  
153a East Street  
London  
SE17 2SD  
Tel: 071 703 9660

■ Scottish AIDS Monitor  
PO Box 48  
Edinburgh  
EH1 3SA  
Tel: 031 557 3885

■ Drugs Alcohol Women Now (DAWN)  
Omnibus Workspace  
39-41 North Road  
London  
N7 9DP  
Tel: 071 700 4653

■ Positively Women  
5 Sebastian Street  
EC1V 0HE  
Tel: 071 490 5515

■ British Pregnancy Advisory Service  
Austy Manor  
Wootton Wawen  
Solihull  
West Midlands  
B95 6BX  
Tel: 0564 793 225

