

The AIDS problem in Scotland : what everyone should know / issued by the Scottish Health Education Group.

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Scottish Health Education Group

Publication/Creation

1988.

Persistent URL

<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/n4mkc9ax>

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THE
AIDS
PROBLEM
IN
SCOTLAND

WHAT
EVERYONE
SHOULD
KNOW

INTRODUCTION

AIDS is a new disease.

At first we thought it was restricted to homosexual men, those who injected drugs and to a few people who were given contaminated blood. You may still think this.

But this has proved **NOT** to be the case. We now know that the disease is spreading to the general public by sexual contact between men and women, so it is something that can affect **everyone**.

However, if we all take some simple steps, we can protect ourselves and help to prevent the spread of the disease.

This leaflet gives advice on what **you** should do.

WHAT IS AIDS?

AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) is caused by a virus which gets into the blood stream and attacks and destroys the body's defence system. When the defences are not working, the body is open to attack from a whole range of infections. This situation can lead to serious illness, cancer and eventually to death in some cases.

However, the virus that causes AIDS is slow acting. It may not produce any obvious effects for several years. This means that people can be 'CARRIERS' of the virus and pass it on to others, often without even realising it.

Although a great deal of research is being done at present:-

✿ **There is no treatment which can cure AIDS** (though some of the unusual infections suffered by AIDS patients can be cured).

✿ **There is no vaccine which offers protection.**

Therefore **PREVENTION** is the only approach to the AIDS problem and everyone must know how to prevent the risk of infection **NOW**.

HOW BIG IS THE AIDS PROBLEM IN SCOTLAND?

The situation is always changing. However, between August 1983 and September 1986

- 881 people are known to have been infected and are 'carriers' of the virus
- 13 people have been identified as known AIDS cases
- 9 of these have died

In Scotland about 65% of this group were people who injected drugs.

HOW CAN YOU AVOID AIDS?

This advice applies to **EVERYONE**.

Some viruses, like those which cause the common cold, influenza, measles, etc are easy to catch. These viruses can be passed on through coughing, sneezing, or just by being close to an infected person. **AIDS virus infection is NOT like that.**

You will **NOT** get the virus:-

- through touching, shaking hands, or sitting next to an infected person.
- through being exposed to coughing or sneezing.
- through common use of cups, plates, cutlery, glasses in pubs, etc.
- through sharing sinks, baths, towels or toilets.

People get the AIDS virus in **THREE** ways:-

- 1 Through sexual intercourse with an infected partner

A woman can be infected from her male partner and an infected woman can pass the virus to a man during intercourse.

It is important to keep the number of partners both you and your partner have to a minimum.

If condoms (French letters, sheaths, "durex") are properly used they can reduce the risk of AIDS and other Sexually Transmitted Diseases. Condoms are easily available. They must be placed over the penis before any sexual contact takes place and kept on throughout intercourse, if they are to offer effective protection. Anal sex is very risky and should be avoided.

2 Through infected blood getting into their body

The virus can get into the blood stream through contaminated needles puncturing the skin. This is how it has spread among people who share needles and syringes when injecting drugs.

It is therefore important to avoid using any device that punctures the skin, unless it has been properly sterilised. This applies to:

-  Needles and syringes
-  Ear piercing equipment
-  Tattooing and acupuncture needles

It is also important to avoid sharing:

-  razors. These might allow the virus to enter through a small cut.
-  toothbrushes. Gums can bleed and might allow the virus to enter.

In addition, care should be taken when dealing with spilt blood.

However, there is no need to worry when you donate blood to the Blood Transfusion Service, because a new sterile needle is used for each donor. Also blood transfusions are very safe. All blood donated in Scotland is now tested for the virus.

3 From an infected mother to her baby during pregnancy or at birth

Mothers who are considered to be at high



risk of having the AIDS virus are offered counselling and a special blood test during their pregnancy.

Until more is known about AIDS, women who have the AIDS virus should avoid becoming pregnant.

WHAT IF YOU KNOW SOMEONE WHO HAS THE VIRUS?

Remember, you are *not* in danger of catching the virus from normal social contact with an infected person—say a friend or someone at work.

Family contacts, apart from sexual partners or children born to infected mothers are not at risk.

If you are a sexual partner of someone with AIDS do not have anal sex or oral sex. For vaginal sex use a condom.

Parents are often concerned that there might be a child with the AIDS virus attending their own child's school or playgroup. Although young children are very active and prone to minor accidents, there is no real danger of the virus being passed on during ordinary school activity. All schools are being given advice on how to take steps to prevent infection and how to treat any child who might be infected. Teachers are also being advised to treat all accidents, blood spillages, cuts, etc, in children with the same care and consideration.

REMEMBER HOW PEOPLE WITH THE AIDS VIRUS MUST BE FEELING

They can feel very frightened and lonely. You can help by treating them just as you would any other person. Taking time to talk and listen with an understanding and caring attitude can be a great help.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR FIRST AID IN ACCIDENTS

The aim is to help you give first aid to people who need it and, at the same time, protect yourself from infection.

If you see a person needing first aid, then give it—but take care.

-  If you have any cuts or scratches, cover them with waterproof dressings.
-  Use disposable rubber gloves if you can.
-  Wash blood splashes off your skin at once with hot soapy water.
-  Clean up spilt blood using household bleach, diluted 1 part to 10 parts of water (Do not put bleach on your skin!)
-  There is no evidence that the disease can be passed on through mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.

FURTHER HELP AND ADVICE

If you are worried that you might have been at risk of catching the virus, you can get advice from:-

-  Your own doctor
-  Scottish A.I.D.S. Monitor,
PO Box 169, Edinburgh EH1 3UU.

-  AIDS Helpline
Telephone (031) 558 1167
(Mon. to Fri. 7.30pm-10pm)
or (041) 221 7467 (Tues. Wed.
& Thurs. 7pm-10pm)



National AIDS Helpline
0800 567123

3/88/STD 1

Issued by the Scottish Health Education Group

Hindson Print Ltd