

AIDS information for travellers / World Health Organization Special Programme on AIDS.

Contributors

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AIDS

Information for Travellers



If you plan to travel, or are already on your way,
here are some basic facts about AIDS.

Concern about AIDS should not prevent
travel to any part of the world.

Whether at home or travelling,
avoiding AIDS is mainly up to you.



**World Health Organization
Special Programme on AIDS**

What is AIDS ?

AIDS is a disease caused by a virus which can break down the body's immune system and lead to fatal infections and some forms of cancer.

Should the traveller be concerned about AIDS?

No matter where you live or travel, you need to know about AIDS. AIDS is a fact in today's world - throughout the world. However, you can easily protect yourself against AIDS during your travels by knowing and following some simple rules.

How is AIDS spread?

The AIDS virus spreads most frequently through sexual activity. The virus can be transmitted from any infected person to his or her sexual partner (man to woman, woman to man, and from man to man). But it is also spread by contaminated blood — in transfusions, on needles, or on any skin-piercing instruments. Also, an AIDS virus-infected mother can transmit the virus to her child before, during or shortly after birth.

Is AIDS spread by casual contact?

No. AIDS is not spread by daily and routine activities ("casual contact") such as sitting next to someone, or shaking hands, or working with people. Nor is it spread by insects or insect bites. And AIDS is not spread by swimming pools, public transportation, food, cups, glasses, plates, toilets, water, air, touching or hugging, coughing or sneezing.

How can sexual spread of AIDS be prevented?

Do not have sex with prostitutes (male or female) or casual acquaintances, even in countries that claim there is no AIDS problem. You cannot tell by appearances if someone is infected with the AIDS virus; he/she can look healthy.

If you are going to have sexual relations with someone who might be infected:

- Men should always use a condom, each time, from start to finish, and women should make sure their partner uses one.
- Remember that vaginal, anal or oral sex can spread AIDS.
- Reducing the number of your sexual partners will lower the risk of exposure to the AIDS virus.

What about AIDS and blood transfusions?

Although AIDS can be transmitted by transfusion of infected blood, in many places blood is screened for AIDS virus contamination before being given. If you need a blood transfusion, try to ensure that screened blood is used. Since more and more countries around the world are now testing blood for the AIDS virus, blood transfusions will increasingly be protected from AIDS virus contamination.

You can reduce the risk of serious injury, leading to possible need for blood transfusions, by taking ordinary, everyday precautions. Wear a seat belt and drive carefully. Don't mix alcohol with driving, boating or other activities that could lead to injury.

What about injections?

Avoid injections unless absolutely necessary. If you must have an injection, make sure the needle and syringe come straight from a sterile package or have been sterilized properly. For example, a needle and syringe which have been cleaned and then boiled for 20 minutes are ready for re-use.

Unless you have a prescription or a doctor's authorization, don't take your own needles with you.

Finally, if you inject drugs — no matter what kind — *never* use anyone else's equipment.

What about skin-piercing instruments?

Like needles and syringes, other instruments that pierce the skin (tattoo and acupuncture needles, ear-piercing equipment and dentists' tools) must always be sterile (used only once or sterilized between each use). As with needles and syringes, proper sterilizing of these instruments eliminates risk. In general, you should avoid any procedures which pierce the skin unless absolutely necessary.

What if you are already infected with the AIDS virus?

If you are already infected with the AIDS virus, consult your personal health care provider for guidance well in advance of your proposed travel.

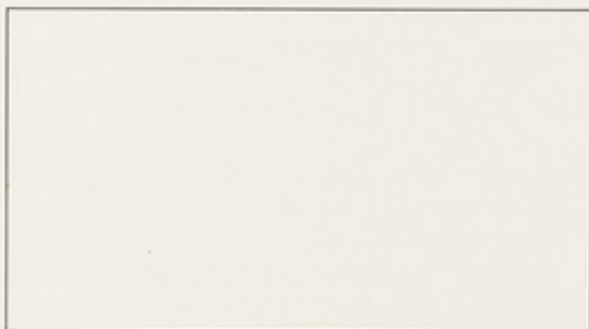
AIDS.

Knowledge is the key to prevention

You can protect yourself against AIDS everywhere in the world, at home or travelling. Don't take risks during your travel that could send AIDS home with you. If this advice sounds strict, remember this: *with no cure or vaccine so far for AIDS, prevention is vital.*

For more information, please contact your health care provider or your local, regional or national health authority.

This leaflet has been prepared by the
World Health Organization which
directs, and coordinates international health
and is leading the global fight against AIDS.



AIDS.
A worldwide effort will stop it



World Health Organization
Special Programme on AIDS

This leaflet is endorsed by the World Tourism Organization.