

# Hope & Healing

## HIV Know the Facts

A heart at peace gives life to the body — Proverbs 14:30

### Introduction

HIV/AIDS is a worldwide disease and one of the most dangerous health problems of all times. But, much that we hear about HIV/AIDS is confusing.

The cause of AIDS is the Human Immunodeficiency Virus. HIV comes from the first three letters of the name of the virus. The word AIDS is made up from the first letters of the words Acquired ImmunoDeficiency Syndrome. AIDS is the infection that occurs when the body's resistance against cancers, germs, and viruses has almost entirely broken down. When the body first gets infected with the virus, it has HIV. You can have HIV for years without being sick, but eventually the body's resistance, its immune system, will break down and the way will be open for the development of both deadly infections and deadly cancers. Eventually everyone who gets HIV will die from AIDS unless they are treated with HIV medications or they die from some other cause, like an accident. The cause of death is almost always an infection of one form or another. Most of the time we will use these two terms, HIV and AIDS, interchangeably, but as you can see they are not actually the same.

### How HIV is Spread

HIV is spread from one person to another, but it is not spread like measles or chicken pox or the common cold. HIV is spread only through sex and through the passage of blood from one person to another in the following ways:

- By sexual intercourse between a man and a woman, the heterosexual act of sex, or between two men, the

homosexual method of having sex. Intercourse using the anus is particularly risky. Vaginal intercourse and oral sex may also spread HIV.

So far about 83% of HIV cases in the United States have been acquired through sex. 50% were between two men having sex together and 32% occurred when sex was between a man and a woman.

Homosexual sex spreads the virus more easily because of anal intercourse and because they have multiple partners and because homosexuals often have skin sores caused by other infections carried through sex. The HIV virus can enter the blood stream through any break in the skin. The virus can be spread from a man to another man, from a woman to a man, and from a man to a woman.

- HIV is also spread by drug users who pull blood into a syringe to mix with a drug and after injecting themselves they will pass the dirty needle and syringe to someone else to use.
- HIV is spread to babies during pregnancy from infected mothers, or during delivery or possibly during breast feeding.

- HIV is spread through contaminated blood or blood products. Between 1978 and 1985, before tests were developed to screen blood, 120,000 to 150,000 Americans got HIV from contaminated blood. Now, there is very little danger of getting contaminated blood if you must have a blood transfusion. The new screening methods are very effective.

That's it. You can't get it from a toilet seat, or from a drinking glass in a restaurant or from mosquito or bedbug

bites. Shaking hands and kissing have not been shown to spread the virus (although deep kissing may not be absolutely safe). No cases of HIV have been found to have been spread through tears, saliva, feces, sweat, urine, food, or drink. Sex is the big risk and anal sex is by far the greatest risk.

Now, let's answer some questions and get answers about the HIV virus and infection.

### How Can I Know If I Am Infected?

That's part of the problem. HIV isn't like the chicken pox, which is easily recognized by the doctor. At first it's like having the flu or mononucleosis. This occurs a few weeks after getting infected. If you see a doctor during this time, the doctor may not discover the real cause of your trouble. You'll gradually regain your strength as your body fights off the effects of the virus. This may last for years and you may feel as well as ever, but you will be able to infect other people during this time.

Your immune system will gradually be weakened by the virus, and over time other problems will begin to appear. You may get diarrhea, tiredness, fever, lymph node enlargement, weight loss, difficulty swallowing, a dry cough, sores, rashes, and headaches.

At some point your T-helper cells may fall below 200. Your body is then no longer able to defend itself against certain kinds of pneumonia, several types of cancer, and infections of the brain.

### Why Do Some People Who Have The HIV Virus Look Healthy?

Some viruses cause trouble quickly.

HIV infection causes a period of fever and aching of the muscles with nausea and sometimes diarrhea. This occurs two to six weeks after exposure. Following this there may be no symptoms at all for years. The virus is in the body, slowly crippling the body's immune system. This may go on for 5-10 years and during this time the infected person can pass the virus to others through sex without knowing that he or she is sick.

### Won't A Condom Protect Me? \_\_\_\_\_

Condoms do provide some protection. But, studies show that they can fail to protect teens who are using them to prevent pregnancy. This is why there is no "safe sex." There is only "safer sex" — safer than having sex without a condom.

### So What's The Best Protection? \_

- If you're married, don't have sex with anyone but your spouse.
- If you're single, wait until you're married to have sex.
- Don't inject drugs.
- Avoid any activity that will bring an infected person's blood, semen, or vaginal fluids into your body.

Don't think of the words "abstinence" or "monogamy" as meaning to have sex every once in a while or to have sex with a steady partner as long as the relationship lasts. These words mean to put off sex until you're married and then to be faithful to one partner for life. If you're fortunate enough not to have already gotten HIV, saving yourself for marriage could be the wisest, healthiest decision you'll ever make.

### Getting An HIV Test \_\_\_\_\_

- Do not request testing if you are at low risk.
- Call your health department if you need the test.
- If you test positive, but are at low risk, have the test repeated in another laboratory.

- If your test is negative, but you're still concerned wait a few months and get tested again.
- Caution: Don't get tested near the time of a flu shot. The flu vaccine may cause a false reading.

### Summary \_\_\_\_\_

The prevention of HIV is straightforward - abstinence until marriage and monogamy within marriage. There is no other course that you can follow and be assured that you have not been exposed. The peace of mind is worth a lot. Don't be misled by fears, misinformation and myths. If you have questions ask your doctor. Keep up with the developments in this fast changing field. Today's answer will be added to by tomorrow's research.

## Awaken the Miracles Within You

### The Miracle of Building and Wrecking

We learn to get along with others by building up a new mental attitude and by tearing down old mental concepts. It's not bricks and mortar, just thinking.

If you're willing to build a new mental outlook, you must be prepared to nurture your new thinking until it becomes a habit by your actions.

What will wreck your new attitude? Doubt, negative thinking. It's like building a new wall one day and tearing it down the next. At the end of the year, what have you built?

Nothing.

Think well about the other person and think long about the other person, then your good thoughts will show in your actions.

*The recommendations and information in this handout are appropriate in most cases. However, for specific information concerning your personal medical condition, please, consult your doctor.*