

HIV & AIDS

condoms

safe sex

**alcohol
& drugs**

testing

holidays

i nformation for young people

AVERT
AVERTing HIV & AIDS Worldwide

What is HIV?

HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus and HIV is the virus that causes AIDS. People can become infected with HIV and they can pass it on to other people. A person infected with HIV is infected for life. People infected with HIV can look and feel well for a long time.

What is AIDS?

AIDS stands for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. A person is said to have AIDS if they are infected with HIV and in addition they have developed one of a number of particularly severe illnesses. There is currently no cure for AIDS and no vaccine to prevent it.

Talking about HIV, AIDS and Sex

Talking about HIV, AIDS and sex can be difficult for both young people and adults. This information might help you feel more confident about this.

How can people become infected with HIV?

There are a number of ways you can become infected.

These include:

- Having sexual intercourse with someone who is infected.
- Injecting drugs using a needle or syringe which has already been used by an infected person.
- An infected pregnant woman can pass the virus on to her unborn baby either before or during birth. HIV can also be passed on during breastfeeding.
- Blood transfusions are a possible route of transmission, although most countries now screen the blood supply from HIV, meaning the risk is extremely small.
- Oral sex is a possible risk, although infection from oral sex (blowjobs) on its own seems to be quite rare.

You can't become infected by:

- Sharing a cup or cutlery with someone who is infected.
- Eating food prepared by someone who is infected.
- Touching, hugging, kissing or general contact with an infected person.
- Using the same toilet as someone with HIV.

How can someone become infected through sexual intercourse?

HIV is found in the sexual fluids of an infected person. For a male this means in the fluids which come out of the penis before and during sex. For a female, it means HIV is in the fluids produced in the vagina before and during sex to help make intercourse easier.

- If a male with HIV has vaginal intercourse without a condom infected fluid can pass into the female's blood stream through a tiny cut or sore inside her body. This can be so small that you don't know about it.**
- If a couple have anal intercourse the risk of infection is greater than with vaginal intercourse. The lining of the anus, or back passage, is more delicate than the lining of the vagina and is more likely to be damaged during sex.**
- If a female with HIV has sexual intercourse without a condom, HIV could get into the male's blood through a sore patch on his penis or by getting under his foreskin or into his urethra (the tube which runs down the penis).**
- If there is any contact with blood during sex, this increases the risk of infection. For example, there may be blood in the vagina if intercourse happens during a female's period. There can also be bleeding during anal intercourse.**

There are lots of sexual activities that are completely safe and will not put you at risk.

you can kiss, cuddle, massage and rub each other's bodies

Mutual masturbation - fingering and touching each other's sexual parts (but avoid getting semen or vaginal fluids on broken skin)

Exploring and enjoying these sexual activities can be fun. They can also be a good way to learn about your body and how to give and receive sexual pleasure.

Just because you're going out with someone you don't have to have sexual intercourse together. For some people sexual feelings are bound up with love and close relationships. Some think sex should only happen within marriage. For some people sex and love are two different things. What is important is that you feel good about yourself and what you are doing, and that you keep yourself safe.

'No one should be pressurised into having sex when they would rather not'

How can you protect yourself and your partner?

If you and your partner decide to have sexual intercourse you need to PROTECT AGAINST HIV.

Using a condom is the ONLY way to reduce the risk of infection. The contraceptive pill is very good at preventing pregnancy but it offers no protection against HIV.

Also, knowing someone well isn't going to protect you against HIV if your partner is infected. And you might think you know someone well enough after meeting them a few times. But you cannot tell if someone is free from infection just by looking at them - it doesn't matter how nice they are!

It can be difficult to say that you want to use a condom. You might be worried that it suggests that you don't trust your partner or that you:

- think they could be infected
- think they are bisexual
- think they have used drugs
- think they have slept around

But, condoms are there to keep you both safe. If you feel safe, you can both relax and enjoy sex all the more.

'I wouldn't mind telling a bloke to wear a condom even if I'd fancied him for ages ... if he said 'No', then tough'.

Condoms

Condoms come in different colours, shapes and flavours! Some have lubrication to help make sex easier; some are flavoured to make oral sex more enjoyable and some are thicker for anal intercourse. It's a good idea to try different types to find the ones you both like the best.

In the UK anyone can buy condoms. You don't have to be over 16. Or, you can get them free from a Family Planning Clinic or some GPs (doctors).

Using condoms

Before using a condom check on the packet that the "use by date has not passed. It's a good idea to practise with condoms before having sex to get used to them and give you more confidence.

Condoms can stretch but are delicate. You must be careful not to tear or make any holes in a condom either when getting it out of the packet OR when using it. Some condoms have a teat at the end and if you squeeze the teat as it is rolled on to the penis it avoids a bubble of air inside the condom - it could break otherwise. Put the condom on the penis when it is hard before you begin to have intercourse. Condoms will only unroll in one direction. After "coming" hold the condom in place as you pull out.

With anal intercourse, you might want to use a stronger condom, (although studies have shown a regular condom should be just as effective). If you need extra lubrication, make sure it is water-based, (for example KY jelly). You can buy lubricants from supermarkets and chemists. Do not use Vaseline as it is oil based and will 'rot' the condom.

Condoms must only be used once. You shouldn't use more than one condom at a time. This makes them tear and it doesn't provide double protection.



Alcohol and other drugs

Alcohol and other drugs can increase the risk of HIV infection by making you less careful about the way you behave. If you're drunk, stoned, or "out of it" it can be easier for "things to happen". You might have sex and find it difficult to use a condom. You might even forget altogether about protecting yourself. Alcohol, cannabis, ecstasy, LSD and other drugs can change the way you feel and the way you act.

Sharing equipment used to inject drugs can also pass on HIV. Blood can remain on needles and syringes (works) and if you use these after someone infected with HIV, the virus can be injected directly into your blood. The best way to avoid infections is not to inject drugs. The next best thing is not to share works with anyone.

'Drink does affect you and you could do something you might regret'.



Holidays

It is important to think about the risk of HIV before you go on holiday. Always take precautions - no matter where you are going. There is now HIV infection in almost every country in the world. Many young people go on holiday either abroad or in this country to meet people and have a good time. Sex may be part of the fun. Casual sex on holiday is certainly risky if you take no precautions against HIV infection. So if you think you may have a holiday romance take some condoms with you.

If you think you have been at risk...

If you are in the UK you can have a free blood test for HIV. But, HIV usually can not be detected in the blood through a test for three months after infection takes place. This means that if you are worried about something that happened a few days ago it will be three months before a test will give a definite result.

Testing is available from GPs and most Genito-Urinary Medicine Clinics (these may be known as STD, VD or Special Clinics) and many Drug Advice Services. Visiting a clinic means the test will be completely confidential and can be anonymous. Results normally take about a week to come back.

If you are having a test, then before the test somebody will explain to you how the test is done and how the result will be given. They will provide an opportunity to discuss why you think are at risk, what result you might expect and how you might cope, whatever the result.

Then a doctor or nurse takes a small sample of your blood, which is taken away and tested for HIV antibodies. After the test you will be given your results privately and in person. No results will ever be given over the phone or by letter. Lots of help and support is given, whatever the result.

Further help and advice

Talking about your feelings, worries and concerns can help.

'It's good to have someone in your life who is an adult, someone who you can talk to'.

The person you talk to should be someone you feel easy and relaxed with. Sometimes talking to parents or people you are close to might be difficult. But you could talk to a friend or their parents or a teacher or a doctor, anyone you feel you can trust and will help you in some way.

www.AVERT.org has a wide selection of websites and telephone helplines you can contact for further help and advice.

Please visit www.avert.org/help.htm for more information

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