

# HIV AND AIDS



## AIDS

Is caused by a virus called HIV.

## HIV

Stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus it is a tiny virus which attacks our immune system.

Usually our immune system protects our body from viruses and other diseases such as cancer. Special cells in the immune system called T cells rush to attack viruses to stop us becoming unwell.

HIV gets into our body and hides inside the T cells. This means our immune system can't fight it off.

HIV can be in your body and you may not show any symptoms. Unless you have an HIV test you won't know it is there. HIV grows inside the T cells. After a while the virus kills the T cells and escapes into the bloodstream looking for more T cells to infect.

When someone becomes infected with HIV it is called being HIV positive.

People who have HIV can remain well for years before symptoms can show up.

You can be infected with HIV from someone who doesn't even know they've got it – if you are not protecting yourself.

You can have a blood test to see if you have HIV.

The HIV test might not show anything until 3 months after you get the virus – but you can still pass it on over this time.

When most of the T cells are killed, the immune system doesn't work properly any more.

Our body can no longer fight off diseases.

The person with HIV can become very sick.

This illness is called AIDS which stands for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome.

AIDS is a very serious illness. It could kill you.

When you have AIDS you can die because your body can no longer protect itself from diseases.

## Treatment

There have been lots of advances in anti-HIV treatments in the last few years and, although there is still no cure for HIV infection, most HIV positive people can now live for much longer.

You cannot get HIV by

- Wanking.
- Hugging.
- Kissing.
- Sharing cups, knives and forks.
- Insect bites.
- Sharing toilet seats.
- Sharing towels, clothes and bedding.
- Sharing telephones.
- Working with someone who has HIV.
- Living with someone who has HIV.
- Looking after someone who has HIV.

You can only be infected with HIV when blood infected with the virus (including period blood) or infected semen or infected vaginal fluid gets into your body.

This can happen:

- During sex.
- By sharing needles and syringes.
- By a mother who has the virus passing it to her unborn child, although by using drug treatments this risk can be reduced.

You can make sure you don't get infected with HIV by:

- Having safe sex – use a condom for vaginal and anal sex.
- Not sharing needles and syringes.

## Unsafe Sex

It is very unsafe to:

- Have anal sex without a condom.
- Have vaginal sex without a condom.

If you have anal sex or vaginal sex without a condom, you run the risk of becoming infected by HIV.

There are all kinds of ways to have safe sex

Here are some of the things that are safe:

- Masturbation (wanking) with your partner.
- Vaginal sex using a condom and water based lubricant.
- Anal sex using a condom and water based lubricant.
- Oral sex is safest if you do not let your partner cum in your mouth.
- Kissing, licking, stroking and hugging are completely safe.

Not sharing needles and syringes means for...

- Injecting drugs.
- Body piercings.
- Tattoos.

If you use needles or syringes for taking drugs, make sure that you use your own injecting equipment.

Don't share.