

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT HIV & AIDS

WHAT IS AIDS?

AIDS is the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome – a serious illness that makes the body unable to fight infection. A person with AIDS is susceptible to certain infections and cancers. When a person with AIDS cannot fight off infections, this person becomes ill. These infections can eventually kill a person with AIDS.

WHAT CAUSES AIDS?

The human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) causes AIDS. Early diagnosis of HIV infection is important! If you have been told that you have HIV, you should get prompt medical treatment. In many cases, early treatment can enhance a person's ability to remain healthy as long as possible. Your doctor will help you determine the best treatment for you. Free or reduced cost anonymous and confidential testing with counseling is available at most local health departments in Kentucky. After being infected with HIV, it takes between two weeks to six months before the test can detect antibodies to the virus.

HOW IS THE HIV VIRUS SPREAD?

- * Sexual contact (oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse) with an infected person when blood, pre-ejaculation fluid, semen or cervical/vaginal secretions are exchanged.
- * Sharing syringes, needles, cotton, cookers and other drug injecting equipment with someone who is infected.
- * Receiving contaminated blood or blood products (very unlikely now because blood used in transfusions has been tested for HIV antibodies since March 1985).
- * An infected mother passing HIV to her unborn child before or during childbirth, and through breast feeding.
- * Receipt of transplant, tissue/organs, or artificial insemination from an infected donor.
- * Needle stick or other sharps injury in a health care setting involving an infected person. Infections can sometimes be prevented by taking post-exposure prophylaxis anti-retroviral drugs. Strict adherence to universal precautions is the best way to prevent exposures.

YOU CANNOT GET HIV THROUGH CASUAL CONTACT SUCH AS:

- * Sharing food, utensils, or plates
- * Touching someone who is infected with HIV
- * Hugging or shaking hands
- * Donating blood or plasma (this has NEVER been a risk for contracting HIV)
- * Using public rest rooms
- * Being bitten by mosquitoes or other insects
- * Using tanning beds (always clean before and after use)

HOW CAN I PREVENT HIV/AIDS?

- * Do not share needles or other drug paraphernalia.
- * Do not have sexual intercourse except with a monogamous partner whom you know is not infected and who is not sharing needles. If you choose to have sex with anyone else, use latex condoms (rubbers), female condoms or dental dams, and water based lubricants every time you have sex.
- * Educate yourself and others about HIV infection and AIDS.

WOMEN AND HIV/AIDS

For females with HIV/AIDS in Kentucky, heterosexual exposure and injection drug use are the most common modes of transmission of HIV. HIV can be spread through body fluids (i.e., blood, semen, vaginal secretions, and breast milk).

All pregnant women should have blood tests to check for HIV infection.

- * Mothers can pass HIV infection to their babies during pregnancy, labor and delivery, and by the child ingesting infected breast milk.
- * Without treatment, about 25% (1 out of 4) of the babies born to HIV infected women will get HIV.
- * Medical treatment for the HIV infected woman during pregnancy, labor, and delivery can reduce the chance of the baby getting HIV from its mother to less than 2% (less than 2 out of 100).
- * An HIV infected mother should not breastfeed her newborn baby.

IS TREATMENT AVAILABLE IF I ALREADY HAVE HIV/AIDS?

After being infected with HIV, it takes between two weeks to six months before the test can detect the HIV virus.

Early diagnosis of HIV infection is important! Free anonymous and confidential testing and counseling is available at every Health Department in Kentucky. Testing requires drawing a small tube of blood from a vein in your arm. If you have HIV, you should get prompt medical treatment. In many cases, early treatment can enhance a person's ability to remain healthy as long as possible. Your doctor will help you determine the best treatment.

GETTING TESTED FOR HIV:

If you have never been tested for HIV, you should be tested at least once. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends being **tested at least once a year if you do things that can transmit HIV.** These include:

- * Injecting drugs or steroids with used injection equipment
- * Having sex with someone who has HIV or any sexually transmitted disease (STD)
- * Having more than one sex partner since your last HIV test
- * Having a sex partner who has had other sex partners since your last HIV test
- * Having sex for money or drugs (prostitution- male or female)
- * Having unprotected sex or sex with someone who has had unprotected sex
- * Having sex with injecting drug user(s)
- * Having had a blood transfusion between 1978 and 1985
- * Pregnant women or women desiring to become pregnant

Remember: You can't tell whether or not someone has HIV just by looking at them!

WHAT IS UNSAFE SEX?

- * Vaginal, anal, or oral sex without using a condom or dental dam
- * Sharing sex toys
- * Contact with HIV infected blood, semen, or vaginal fluid

WHAT IS "SAFER" SEX?

- * Abstinence (not having sex of any kind)
- * Sex only with a person who does not have HIV, does not practice unsafe sex, or inject drugs
- * Using either a male or female condom or dental dam (for oral sex)

How to use a latex condom:

1. Use a new latex condom every time you have sex.
2. The condom should be rolled onto the erect (hard) penis, pinching ½ inch at the tip of the condom to hold the ejaculation (semen) fluid. Air bubbles should be smoothed out.
3. Use plenty of WATER-BASED lubricants such as K-Y Jelly, including a drop or two inside the condom, before and during intercourse. **DO NOT USE** oil-based lubricants such as petroleum jelly, mineral oil, vegetable oil, Crisco, or cold cream.
4. After ejaculating, withdraw the penis holding the condom at the base so it will not slip off.
5. Throw away the used condom into a garbage can and wash hands.

This agency provides quality services to all patients, regardless of HIV status.

IF YOU NEED MORE INFORMATION CALL:

Kentucky HIV/AIDS Program 502-564-6539

The National AIDS Hotline 1-800-342-AIDS

Your local health department's HIV/AIDS Coordinator