

“stop the spread of diseases”



1

HIV and AIDS

What is HIV and AIDS?

1. HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus. It is a virus that infects cells of the human immune system and destroys or impairs their function. Infection with this virus results in the progressive deterioration of the immune system, leading to increased susceptibility to other diseases and AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome). AIDS encompasses the signs, symptoms, infections, and cancers associated with the deficiency of the immune system that stems from infection with HIV.
2. There are usually no symptoms of HIV when first infected. However, an HIV-infected person is highly infectious during this initial period and can transmit the virus to another person.
3. The only way to determine whether HIV is present in a person's body is by testing for HIV.
4. Most untreated people with HIV develop signs of HIV-related illnesses within 5-10 years, but the time between infection with HIV and being diagnosed with AIDS can be 10-15 years or longer.
5. Antiretroviral therapy can slow down disease progression to AIDS with drugs that inhibit the ability of retroviruses (such as HIV) to multiply in the body.
6. With appropriate treatment, some people with HIV live a normal life for many years. However, there is no known cure.

Prevention

7. HIV is found in many body fluids including blood, semen, vaginal fluids and breast milk.
8. HIV is transmitted in many ways through:
 - a. **unprotected penetrative (vaginal or anal) and oral sex with an infected person**
 - b. **a blood transfusion with contaminated blood**
 - c. **use of contaminated syringes, needles or other sharp instruments**
 - d. **from an infected mother to her child during pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding**
9. HIV is not transmitted from day-to-day contact – you cannot get it from any of the following:
 - a. **shaking someone's hand**
 - b. **hugging or kissing someone on the mouth**
 - c. **using the same toilet or drinking glass**
 - d. **playing sports with or being exposed to coughing or sneezing by anyone living with HIV**

“stop the spread of diseases”



1

HIV and AIDS

Prevention

10. You can lower your risk of contracting HIV by:
 - a. abstaining from sex
 - b. remaining faithful in a relationship with an uninfected equally faithful partner with no other risk behaviour
 - c. correctly using condoms every time you have sex
 - d. getting tested and treated for sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
 - e. delaying the age you begin to have sexual relations
 - f. avoiding injecting drugs or always using new and disposable needles and syringes
 - g. ensuring that any blood or blood products that you might need are tested for HIV and that blood safety standards are implemented
11. Remember that no sexual act is 100 per cent safe. Safer sex involves taking precautions that decrease the potential of transmitting or acquiring STIs through sex. Using condoms correctly every time one has sex is considered 'safer' sex.

Did you know...? *(UNAIDS 2007 unless otherwise stated)*

12. In 2007, around 2.5 million people were newly infected with HIV and 2.1 million people died of AIDS-related illnesses.
13. Half of the new infections are among young people aged 15 to 24 years old. Today, 12 million young people are living with HIV and AIDS and 6,000 are infected daily – one every 15 seconds *(UNAIDS and the World Assembly of Youth Statement on World AIDS Day, December 2006)*.
14. Women and young girls are more vulnerable to contracting the virus because of the way their bodies are built. Also, because of gender inequality in many countries women have limited power.
15. The average number of years that people living with HIV are estimated to survive without treatment has increased from nine to 11 years.
16. People living with HIV are at a much greater risk of developing deadly diseases like tuberculosis. HIV is responsible for high tuberculosis infection rates.