



ASSESSMENT SERVICES

Barry T. Reed, Director

HIV/AIDS Information and Resources

What is HIV/AIDS?

HIV stands for human immunodeficiency virus. It is the virus that can lead to acquired immunodeficiency syndrome, or AIDS. Unlike some other viruses, the human body cannot get rid of HIV. That means that once you have HIV, you have it for life.

HIV affects specific cells of the immune system, called CD4 cells, or T cells. Over time, HIV can destroy so many of these cells that the body can't fight off infections and disease. When this happens, HIV infection leads to AIDS.

How is HIV transmitted?

Only certain fluids—blood, semen (*cum*), pre-seminal fluid (*pre-cum*), rectal fluids, vaginal fluids, and breast milk—from an HIV-infected person can transmit HIV. These fluids must come in contact with a mucous membrane or damaged tissue or be directly injected into the bloodstream (from a needle or syringe) for transmission to possibly occur. Mucous membranes can be found inside the rectum, the vagina, the opening of the penis, and the mouth.

HIV is spread mainly by:

- Having unprotected sex (sex without a condom) with someone who has HIV.
 - Anal sex is the highest-risk sexual behavior. Receptive anal sex (bottoming) is riskier than insertive anal sex (topping).
 - Vaginal sex is the second highest-risk sexual behavior.
 - Having multiple sex partners or having other sexually transmitted infections can increase the risk of infection through sex.
- Sharing needles, syringes, rinse water, or other equipment (works) used to prepare injection drugs with someone who has HIV.

How can I prevent myself from getting HIV?

HIV can be spread by having unprotected sexual contact with an HIV-positive person. "Unprotected" means sex (anal, oral, or vaginal) without barrier protection, like a condom.

Don't have sex. Sex (anal, oral, or vaginal) is the main way that HIV is transmitted. If you aren't having sexual contact, you are 100% protected from getting HIV in that way.

Be monogamous. Being monogamous means: 1) You are in a sexual relationship with only one person and 2) Both of you are having sex only with each other. Having only one sex partner reduces your risk of getting HIV—but monogamy won't protect you completely unless you know for sure that both you and your partner are not infected with HIV.

Get tested and know your partner's status: Knowing your own status is important for both your health *and* the health of your partner. Talking about your HIV status can be difficult or uncomfortable—but it's important to

start the discussion BEFORE you have sex. If you have more than one sex partner, the CDC recommends that you be tested for HIV and other *sexually transmitted infections* (STIs) every 3-6 months.

Use condoms consistently and correctly. To reduce your risk of getting HIV or other STIs, you must use a new condom with every act of anal, oral, or vaginal sex. You also have to use condoms correctly, to keep them from slipping off or breaking.

You have to use the right kind of condom too. Latex condoms are highly effective against HIV. (If you are allergic to latex, you can use polyurethane or polyisoprene condoms.) Lambskin condoms will NOT protect you from HIV, because the virus is small enough to slip through lambskin.

You should always use a water-based *lubricant* when you use a condom for anal or vaginal sex. Lubricants reduce friction and help keep the condom from breaking. Do NOT use an oil-based lubricant (like petroleum jelly, hand lotion, or cooking oil). Oil-based lubricants can damage condoms and make them less effective.

Both male condoms and *female condoms* will help protect you against HIV and other STIs.

Condoms with the spermicide *Nonoxynol-9* are NOT recommended for STI/HIV prevention. Nonoxynol-9 (N9) irritates rectal and vaginal walls, which increases the chance of HIV infection if infected body fluids do come in contact with them.

If you are injecting drugs and believe you cannot stop using yet, here are some other things that will reduce your risk of getting HIV or transmitting it to others:

- Never use or "share" syringes (needles), water, or drug preparation equipment that has already been used by someone else.
- Use a new, sterile syringe each time you prepare and inject drugs. Try to only use syringes that come from a reliable source or use bleach to clean after each use.
- Use sterile water to prepare drugs, such as water that has been boiled for 5 minutes or clean water from a reliable source (such as fresh tap water).
- Use a new or disinfected container ("cooker") and a new filter ("cotton") each time you prepare drugs.
- Before you inject, clean the injection site with a new alcohol swab.

If you would like more information contact the following:

Johnson County Health Department (913) 894-2525

Wyandotte County Public Health Department (913) 573-8855

Web: hivtest.org <http://hivtest.cdc.gov/Default.aspx>

* You may call Assessment Services for the local numbers of agencies near you that provides testing.

My signature below certifies I have been given a copy of this information on HIV/AIDS, and I am aware of resources to seek more information.

Client

Date

Witness