Prevention

You are not at risk if you are: 1) not sexually active; 2) not sharing needles; or 3) having sex with one person who is not infected with HIV or is not a risk for becoming infected. If you are at risk, you can reduce your risk for HIV infection by taking the following precautions:

- Reduce your number of sex partners. The more people you have sex with the greater your chances are of having sex with someone who is infected.
- Prevent blood, semen, or other body fluids from your sex partner to enter your body through your mouth, vagina, anus, or open cuts or sores.
- Latex condoms, when used consistently and correctly, are highly effective in preventing the transmission of HIV. They should always be used for oral, vaginal, and anal sex. Other birth control methods do not prevent HIV transmission. Polyurethane condoms are now available for those allergic to latex.
- For oral sex on a woman (or on a man’s or woman’s anus) use a new latex barrier each time. This can be a dental dam or a latex condom cut and rolled out flat. For oral sex on a man, use a latex condom.
- The female condom, a polyurethane pouch that is inserted into the vagina, may offer another option instead of the male worn condom.
- Remember that many people who have HIV may not know it and can pass the virus on to unsuspecting sexual partners.
- Be mindful about your use of alcohol and drugs, they can keep you from making responsible choices about sex.
- Talk about AIDS, sex, and drugs with your sexual partner. It’s okay to say “no” to sex, drugs, or alcohol.
- Do not use injectable drugs. If you do use drugs, do not share needles, cookers, or cotton to inject drugs into your body. Also, do not share needles for tattooing or piercing.
- In Minnesota to help prevent the sharing of needles, persons are allowed to buy up to 10 new syringes/needles without a prescription at certain pharmacies.
- All pregnant women should have an HIV test as a routine part of prenatal care.
- If infected with HIV, get into treatment as lower viral loads have shown to reduce the risk of transmission.
- A prescription antiviral drug is now available for high risk persons to take daily (pre-exposure prophylaxis or PrEP) to help reduce their risk of infection.

HIV is spread through sexual contact, through blood-to-blood contact, and from an infected mother to her unborn child. As women learn more about the risk of HIV to themselves and their families, they can also learn what they can do to minimize the possibility of getting HIV infection.

- HIV INFECTION IS A PREVENTABLE DISEASE
- HIV IS NOT SPREAD BY CASUAL CONTACT
- PEOPLE ARE MOST OFTEN INFECTED BY UNPROTECTED SEXUAL CONTACT OR BY SHARING NEEDLES

AIDS Resources

Information and referral services:
Minnesota AIDS Project (MAP) AIDSLine
Metro area: (612) 373-AIDS, (612) 373-2465 TTY
Statewide: (800) 248-AIDS; (888) 820-2437 TTY
http://www.mnaidsproject.org

HIV Counseling and Testing Sites
The following provide free, confidential counseling and HIV antibody testing:
- Crown Medical Center
  Minneapolis (612) 871-4354
- Face to Face Health and Counseling Service, Inc.
  St. Paul (651) 772-5555
- Hennepin County Public Health Clinic
  Red Door Services
  Minneapolis (612) 543-5555
- Clinic 555, St. Paul-Ramsey County
  Department of Public Health
  St. Paul (612) 266-1255
- North Memorial Broadway Family Medicine
  Minneapolis (612) 302-8200
- West Side Community Health Services
  St. Paul (651) 222-1816

There are over 30 other HIV testing sites throughout Minnesota. Contact the MAP AIDSLine (listed above) for a location near you.

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For Women

Facts on AIDS and HIV Infection

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Basics about AIDS

The term “AIDS” stands for acquired immunodeficiency syndrome. AIDS is an illness caused by a virus known as HIV (human immunodeficiency virus). HIV destroys certain cells in the blood that help fight infections. These cells are part of the immune system. Because the virus can weaken the immune system, people with HIV can become ill with other serious infections and some types of cancer referred to as opportunistic diseases. HIV-infected persons are considered to have AIDS when these opportunistic diseases occur or when their blood levels of immune cells drop below a certain point.

Transmission

HIV is spread when body fluids (such as vaginal secretions, semen, or blood) from an infected person enter the body of an uninfected person. This most often happens during sexual intercourse and when people share needles to inject drugs. Also, if women who are infected with HIV become pregnant, they can pass the virus to their children before or during birth or through breast milk. Someone who is infected with HIV from birth may not show any symptoms for years, but still can spread the virus to others.

HIV Is Not Spread By

- Food or drink
- Donating blood
- Coughing or sneezing
- Shared work or school space
- Hugging or touching
- Using public restrooms
- Insects or animals
- Toilet seats
- Shaking hands
- Tears, saliva, sweat, or urine

Persons at High Risk

- People who have unprotected anal intercourse (not using a latex condom)
- People who share drug needles or works
- Women who are sexual partners of men who either share drug needles or have sex with men
- People who have multiple sexual partners and have been exposed to HIV
- Children born to women infected with HIV

Signs and Symptoms

Common signs and symptoms for both men and women:
- Fever lasting for at least one month
- Unexplained weight loss
- Diarrhea lasting for at least one month
- Drenching (severe) night sweats
- Swollen glands in the neck, armpit, or pelvic area (that are not tender when touched) lasting for at least one month
- Creamy white patches in the mouth or on the tongue caused by a fungal infection

Women may also have:
- Vaginal yeast infections that don’t go away
- Pelvic inflammatory disease
- Genital warts
- Ovarian or cervical disease
- Abnormal Pap smears

However, these signs, symptoms, and diseases alone do not necessarily mean that a woman is infected with HIV or has AIDS. Women who experience these symptoms are encouraged to seek medical attention.

HIV in U.S. Women

In 2013, there were 9,278 adult and adolescent female HIV cases reported accounting for 20% of all HIV cases reported that year.

About 16% of the HIV cases reported in women were due to sharing contaminated drug needles.

About 84% of the HIV cases reported in women were due to sexual contact with men.

Among females estimated to be living with HIV:
  - 88% are diagnosed; and,
  - Only 32% have the virus under control and are getting the care they need

Detection

- Many people with HIV have no symptoms and feel well.
- If you do not engage in any of the high risk behaviors, it is very unlikely that you are infected with HIV.
- If you are at risk, you can take a HIV test to see if you are infected. The HIV test measures antibody to HIV. When a person becomes infected with the virus, the person’s body makes antibody against the virus. If you are infected with HIV, it is likely that you will have antibody against HIV.

Non-Consensual Sex

Some women have sex against their will through rape or abusive partners who demand unsafe sex. If you have been sexually assaulted, it is advisable to have a medical examination as soon as possible by a physician or public health clinic. For further information, call Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault listed on the back of this brochure.

HIV Counseling and Testing

If you have shared drug needles, or have had sexual contact with men who either have shared drug needles or have had sex with other men, you should consider having a blood test to determine if you are infected with HIV.

- You can be counseled and tested at HIV Counseling and Testing Sites (see referral services listed in this brochure).
- You can be tested by your private doctor. Be sure that you are also counseled about your risk of HIV infection and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Pregnancy

If you are of childbearing age and have shared drug needles or have had sexual contact with men who either share drug needles or have sex with men, consider the risk to your baby before becoming pregnant. If you engage in these behaviors, you should talk to your doctor about being tested for HIV before planning a pregnancy because you could pass HIV to your unborn child. If you are already pregnant, discuss testing with your doctor. The risk that an untreated HIV infected pregnant women will pass HIV to her newborn child is about 15% to 25%. With medications, the chance of passing HIV to her newborn can be reduced down to 1% to 2%.

Treatment

There is no vaccine or cure for HIV infection or AIDS, but there are treatments that can help people stay healthy and live longer. Effective treatments are available for many of the opportunistic infections and cancers. Combination therapies are now available to help keep one’s immune system healthier longer. Treatment are also available for HIV infected pregnant women to reduce the chance of passing HIV to their newborns. The earlier on gets tested and treated, the more effective the treatment becomes. Lower viral loads due to treatment have been shown to reduce transmission risk.