



HIV Prevention

HIV is entirely preventable. Even if you engage in activities that are associated with an increased risk of contracting HIV, you can take steps to help protect yourself. While abstinence is the only sure way to avoid the risk of contracting HIV, it may not be a viable option for some people. Below are practical ways you can help reduce your risk.

Get Tested

Are you positive you're not positive? Why not get tested for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs)? Treatment for STIs reduces the risk of HIV transmission and early detection of HIV results in better health outcomes. If you know you're infected, you can seek appropriate treatment from health professionals and assistance from your local AIDS service organization.

Use Drugs Safely

If you are using drugs, ensure you are not sharing drug equipment (i.e., needles, syringes and crack pipes). Contact your local AIDS service organization or community health services to find out which harm reduction services, such as needle distribution programs and education on safer drug use, are available to assist you.

Practice Safe Sex

If you are sexually active, ensure that you use a latex condom (for males), or a female condom. To reduce the risk, you can also stop intercourse before ejaculation, or avoid vaginal or anal intercourse altogether. Using a condom or dental dam will lower the risk when participating in oral sex as well.

Maternal Transmission

If you are pregnant and living with HIV, taking antiretroviral therapy for HIV during pregnancy will reduce or eliminate the risk of transmission to your child. After birth, mothers may refrain from breast-feeding, since HIV is transmitted through breastmilk.

Tattooing, Piercing and other Needle-Related Activities

If you engage in tattooing, piercing, electrolysis and acupuncture, ensure that professional equipment and universal precautions are used. This means ensuring that needles are only used once and then disposed of after use.

Other Factors Affecting Risk

Socioeconomic and employment status, level of self-esteem, upbringing, education, religious and cultural background, and experiences with grief, loss, stigma, discrimination and marginalization also play a significant role in HIV risk. These factors often affect your ability to negotiate safer sex or safer drug use. In addition, substance use may impair judgment and lead to increased risk behaviours.

Let's Talk

Talk about your risk. If you think you're at risk, speak with a health service provider to find out your risks and how you can mitigate them. Ask your partner about their sexual history and tell them about yours. Taking care of yourself and others matters.

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