

**Main ideas of HIV & AIDS Reference Sheet 1**

- If a person has HIV, it is in their blood, their semen or vaginal fluid, and, if they're nursing or have recently been pregnant, in their breast milk.
- Once infected, with or without symptoms, the person has HIV and will have it for the rest of their life. They will always be able to transmit it.
- AIDS is the end stage of having HIV, when a health care provider has found that the person has HIV and either a low T-cell count or an opportunistic infection.
- Medications can prevent and treat those things (low T-cells and infections) so the person may live many years, if they have access to medication and can tolerate the side effects.
- Eventually an opportunistic infection may be fatal.
- **WARNING!** myths and stereotypes ...
  - If you heard there was a cure for HIV, be clear that cures on the Internet are unproven and possibly dangerous. Medication can boost a person's immune response so much that their virus levels may drop to where they are undetectable by ordinary tests. That doesn't mean it is gone. It's moved to other parts of the body, such as lymph nodes. Studies have found HIV in the semen of men who had no detectable HIV in their blood.

**Main ideas of HIV & AIDS Reference Sheet 2**

- HIV originated in Africa, as a chimpanzee virus mutated and infected a human being, probably when hunters became exposed to the animal's blood.
- HIV rate is higher for people of African descent probably partly because a gene that protects them from malaria also makes them particularly vulnerable to HIV.
- HIV rate is higher among men who have sex with men partly because the high prevalence increases their risk of exposure.
- HIV rate is higher among people of colour and gay men partly due to racism and homophobia, which contribute to some people avoiding getting tested or treated.

**Main ideas of HIV & AIDS Reference Sheet 3**

- The most common way HIV is transmitted is sexually, especially through anal sex and vaginal sex.
- Unprotected anal sex is considered very risky, both for same-sex and heterosexual couples. Unprotected vaginal sex is also risky. Unprotected oral sex can also transmit HIV.
- Sharing syringes to shoot drugs is considered very risky. Sharing needles for tattoos and piercings can also transmit HIV.
- Women can pass HIV to their babies during pregnancy, birth or breastfeeding. Women with HIV can reduce the risk to the fetus tremendously by taking medication during

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ CLASS \_\_\_\_\_

pregnancy (from one in four fetuses infected without medication to one in 50 when the pregnant woman gets treatment).

- Nowadays in developed countries, transfusion is very safe (one chance in 2 million).

#### WARNING! myths

- It is nearly impossible for people can get HIV from kissing or from a human bite. In fact, there is only one documented case worldwide in which HIV was transmitted through kissing; both people were long-term methamphetamine users and had significant bleeding of the gums.
- Mosquitos DO NOT transmitting HIV.

#### Main ideas of HIV & AIDS Reference Sheet 4

- Abstaining is the safest way to reduce risk. Abstaining from anal, vaginal and oral sex and from drugs.
- People who do have sex can reduce risk significantly by:
  - using condoms and dental dams correctly every single time they have sex.
  - reducing the number of partners they have sex with in their lifetimes and, especially, at the same time.
- People who do use injection drugs can reduce risk by using sterile needles.
- Everyone who has had sex or used needles for drugs can reduce their risk of spreading HIV – or of progressing to AIDS – by getting tested at least once for HIV and also for other STDs – and yearly if they're taking ongoing risks.<sup>28</sup>
- Pregnant women can reduce risk by getting tested for HIV and, if they test positive, taking medication during the pregnancy.