

# Positive Speakers Bureau

## HIV and Sexual Health

A program of People Living With HIV AIDS Victoria Inc

### Frequently asked questions

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Featuring the lived experience of the  
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## Definition of HIV and AIDS

HIV: Human Immune-deficiency Virus

AIDS: Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

What is the difference between HIV and AIDS?

- HIV is a virus that lives in human blood, semen, vaginal fluid and breast milk.
- HIV attacks the body's immune system, in particular the white blood cells (CD4 cells).
- People can carry HIV for long periods before they show any symptoms.
- AIDS is the name given to a specific group of illnesses that occur in people who have HIV. Some examples are pneumonia, cancers and dementia.
- Women can experience different AIDS illnesses than men.

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## How is HIV spread?

- HIV infection nearly always results from unprotected sexual intercourse OR from sharing injecting equipment with an infected person.
- HIV cannot be spread through the air or through household, domestic or workplace contact with an infected person.
- HIV is found in the bodily fluids of infected people, BUT only blood, semen and vaginal fluids have enough virus in them to pose a risk of infecting other people.
- There is no evidence of HIV infection from saliva, urine, vomit or pus.
- There is no evidence of HIV infection through kissing or spitting.
- HIV is a fragile virus outside the body and is easily killed with bleach.
- If correct infection control measures are followed there is no risk of infection.
- Wear disposable gloves when handling any bodily fluid.

## When HIV was first detected?

- HIV antibodies have been detected in blood samples from 1959 and it is thought that it existed as far back as the mid 1920's

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## UNAIDS fast facts on HIV [www.unaids.org](http://www.unaids.org)

*How can you limit your risk of getting HIV through sex?*

- Abstain from sex
- Remain faithful in a relationship with an uninfected equally faithful partner with no other risk behaviour
- Practice only non-penetrative sex
- Use male or female condoms correctly each time you have sex

In addition to the above, you can further reduce the risk of HIV infection through sex?

- Delay the age you begin to have sexual relations
- Reduce the number of sexual partners you have
- Get tested and treated for sexually transmitted infections (STIs)

*How can you prevent the other ways of HIV transmission?*

- Avoid injecting drugs, or if you choose to inject drugs, always use new and disposable needles and syringes
- Ensure that any blood or blood products that you might need are tested for HIV and that blood safety standards are implemented.

*What is 'safer' sex?*

No sexual act is 100% safe. Safer sex involves taking precautions that decrease the potential of transmitting or acquiring STIs, including HIV, through sex. Using condoms correctly every time one has sex is considered 'safer' sex.

*How effective are condoms in preventing HIV?*

Quality-assured male and female condoms are the only products currently available to protect against STIs, including HIV. When used properly every time one has sex, condoms are a proven and effective means of preventing HIV infection in women and men.

However, apart from abstinence, no protective method is 100% effective, and condom use cannot guarantee absolute protection against any STI.

In order to achieve the protective effect of condoms, they must be used correctly all the time. Incorrect use can lead to condom slippage or breakage, thus diminishing their protective effect.

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*What is a female condom?*

The female condom is only female-controlled contraceptive barrier method currently on the market. The female condom is a strong, soft, transparent polyurethane sheath inserted in the vagina before sexual intercourse. It entirely lines the vagina and provides protection against both pregnancy and STIs including HIV, when used correctly at each act of intercourse.

*What is the risk of getting HIV from kissing?*

Transmission through kissing on the mouth carries virtually no risk; no evidence has been found that the virus is spread through saliva by kissing.

*What is the risk of getting HIV through body piercing or from a tattoo?*

A risk of HIV transmission exists if non-sterile instruments are used. Instruments that are intended to penetrate the skin should be sterilized and used once, then disposed of or sterilized again.

*What is the risk of getting HIV from sharing razors with a person living with HIV?*

Any kind of cut using a non-sterile object, such as a razor or knife, can transmit HIV. Sharing razors, knives or other sharp instruments with anyone is not advised, unless they are fully sterilized after each use.

*Is it ever completely safe to have sex with a HIV-positive person?*

No, there is always a risk of transmission when having sex with a HIV-positive person.

The risk can be significantly reduced if condoms are properly used every time one has sex.

*Is it safe for two HIV-positive individuals to engage in unprotected sex exclusively with each other?*

No, it is not safe for two HIV-positive individuals to have unprotected sex with each other as re-infection with other types of HIV and the transmission of other STIs can occur. Use of condoms always is advised, even when both partners are HIV-positive.

*How can mother-to-child transmission be prevented?*

Transmission of HIV from an infected mother to her child can occur during pregnancy, during labour or after delivery through breastfeeding. The risk of mother-to-child transmission can be reduced by the following:

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- Treatment with antiretroviral drugs
- Caesarean section
- Avoiding breastfeeding, but only when replacement feeding is acceptable, feasible, affordable, sustainable and safe. If not, exclusive breastfeeding is recommended for the first 6 months.

*How can people who inject drugs reduce their risk of contracting HIV?*

People who inject drugs are at high risk because they can inject HIV directly into their blood stream. But there are certain steps they can take to reduce this risk:

- Take drugs orally (i.e. change from injecting to non-injecting drug use).
- Do not re-use or use the same needles, syringes, water or drug-preparation equipment with other people.
- Use a new syringe (obtained from a reliable source, e.g. a chemist or a needle exchange programme) to prepare and inject drugs each time.
- When preparing drugs, use sterile water or clean water from a reliable source.
- Use a fresh alcohol swab to clean the skin prior to injection.

*How can health-care workers help to prevent transmission in health-care settings?*

Health-care workers should follow Universal Precautions which are infection-control guidelines developed to protect health workers and their patients from exposure to diseases spread by blood and certain body fluids.

Universal Precautions include:

- Careful handling and disposal of 'sharps' (items that could cause cuts or puncture wounds, including needles, hypodermic needles, scalpel and other blades,
- knives, infusion sets, saws, broken glass, and nails)
- Hand-washing with soap and water before and after all procedures;
- Use of protective barriers such as gloves, gowns, aprons, masks and goggles
- when in direct contact with blood and other body fluids;
- Safe disposal of waste contaminated with blood or body fluids;
- Disinfection of instruments and other contaminated equipment; and
- Proper handling of bedding and clothing stained with blood, diarrhoea or other body fluids.

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*What should you do if you think you have exposed yourself to HIV?*

If you think you've been exposed to HIV, you should get immediately seek help from your local health authority to receive counselling and testing for HIV. You should take precautions to prevent transmitting HIV to others in case you are infected with HIV.

*What is PEP?*

Antiretroviral drugs can be prescribed within 72 hours of exposure to potentially HIV infected blood or body fluids to prevent HIV sero conversion. This is called "post exposure prophylaxis for HIV infection" (HIV-PEP). However HIV-PEP is not 100% effective, even when started very shortly after exposure, so it is vitally important to try to take every measure to prevent transmission of HIV in the first place.

*Does HIV only affect men who have sex with men and people who inject drugs?*

No. Anyone who has unprotected sex, uses un-sterilized injecting equipment, or has a transfusion with contaminated blood can become infected with HIV. Infants can be infected with HIV from their mothers during pregnancy, during labour or after delivery through breastfeeding. Worldwide, 90% of HIV cases are the result of sexual transmission, and 60–70% of HIV cases occur among heterosexuals.

*Can I tell someone has HIV just by looking at them?*

No, you cannot tell if someone has HIV by just looking at them. A person infected with HIV may look healthy and feel good, but they can still pass the virus to you. A blood test is the only way a person can find out if he or she is infected with HIV.

*Can I have more than one STI at a time?*

Yes, you can have more than one STI at the same time. Each infection requires its own treatment. You cannot become immune to STIs. You can catch the same infection over and over again.

Many men and women do not see or feel any early symptoms when they first become infected with an STI, however, they can still infect their sexual partner. Presence STIs can also increase your vulnerability to HIV infection

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*When you are on antiretroviral therapy, can you transmit the virus to others?*

Antiretroviral therapy for HIV does not prevent an infected person from passing on the virus to others. It can keep viral load down to undetectable levels, but HIV is still present in the body and can be transmitted to others through sexual contact, by sharing injecting equipment, or from mothers to their infants during pregnancy, childbirth or breastfeeding.

*Are mosquito bites a risk of infection with HIV?*

HIV is not spread by mosquitoes or other biting insects. Even if the virus enters a mosquito or another sucking or biting insect, it cannot reproduce in insects. Since the insect cannot be infected with HIV, it cannot transmit HIV to the next human it feeds on or bites.

*Does male circumcision prevent HIV transmission?*

Recent studies suggest that male circumcision can reduce the risk of acquiring HIV through sex. However, it is not 100% effective and circumcised men can still become infected. In addition, HIV-positive men who are circumcised can infect their sexual partners. Male circumcision should not replace other known methods of prevention, but be always considered as part of a comprehensive of prevention strategy.

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## Australian HIV Facts and Figures

- As of December 2008 there have been 28330 HIV diagnoses since 1981.
- There have been 10348 AIDS diagnoses.
- 6765 people have died of AIDS. Of those diagnosed with AIDS prior to 1998, 101 were known to be still living in 2007.
- 1509 Victorians have died of AIDS – 1337 prior to 1999
- 17444 people were living with HIV in 2008 of which 1100 were adult/adolescent women.
- 12053 people aged 15-49 were living with HIV at the end of 2008
- Approximately 86% of Australians with HIV are men who have sex with men. The rest are heterosexuals (10%) (women & men), and intravenous drug users (1%) and 3% undetermined.

NB. figures adjusted for multiple reports

### How many people in Australia were diagnosed with HIV in 2008?

- 995 were diagnosed with HIV
- 10.0% were through heterosexual contact, 1% IDU and 3% undetermined

### How many Victorians were newly diagnosed with HIV in 2008?

- 284- 59% were aged between 30-49 – 24 were diagnosed overseas
- 35 were female
- 1 was aged between 0-12 years old
- 2 males and two females were aged between 13-19 years old

(sources: Australian HIV Surveillance Report, National Centre in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research, September 2009.

### How many Victorians aged 15-24 were living with HIV in 2008?

- 68

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## HIV & AIDS Worldwide

- An estimated 33.2 million people were living with HIV/AIDS at the end of 2008 – of these 2.3 million are children under 15 years.  
The vast majority are unaware of their status
- Approximately 50% are women and children.
- To date AIDS has killed more than 25 million people
- 5480 people die of AIDS everyday
- More than two thirds (22 million) of all people with HIV live in Sub Saharan Africa where more than three quarters of all AIDS related deaths in 2007 occurred.
- 2.1 million people died of AIDS during 2008.
- In 2007, 45% of HIV infections were in young people aged 15-24.
- Some 10 million youth (15 – 24) are living with HIV and an estimated 2835 youth contract HIV each day.
- 2 million children under 15 are living with HIV
- 370000 children under 15 contacted HIV in 2008
- 270000 children under 15 died of AIDS in 2008
- In 2008 there were around 2.7 million new HIV infections – over 7400 per day, about five every minute and 96% were low and middle income countries
- Worldwide, 90% of HIV cases are the result of sexual transmission, and 60–70% of HIV cases occur among heterosexuals.
- Injecting drug use accounts for almost 9%

Sources: Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and World Health Organisation AIDS epidemic update July 2008

[www.unaids.org](http://www.unaids.org)

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# 0

**We've done the research and we have nothing to show for it.**

**There have been 0 confirmed cases of HIV transmission anywhere from discarded syringe injuries.**

And according to the Department of Human Services there have been:

0 confirmed cases of HIV or Hepatitis B transmission anywhere in the world via injury from discarded syringe/injecting equipment.

0 confirmed cases of Hepatitis C transmission in Australia via injury from discarded syringe /injecting equipment. There has been only one case of Hepatitis C transmission - in Spain, July 2005.

The greatest risk, like any wound received out in open environment, is Tetanus.

**Consult your doctor or call 1800 552 355 immediately if you have a needlestick injury.**



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## Age of Consent

[www.legalaid.vic.gov.au](http://www.legalaid.vic.gov.au) " am I old enough"

"The law tries to protect you from physical and emotional harm. The law is the same for gay and straight people. The law makes rules about sex and sexual touching. It says that any sexual touching without your agreement is unlawful. It also sets age limits for having sex. The age limit is designed to protect you from exploitation from older people.

The law says if you are:

Under 10 – no-one can have sex with you or touch you sexually or perform a sexual act in front of you (even if you agree).

10-15 – a person can't have sex with you, touch you sexually or perform a sexual act in front of you if they are two years older than you, even if you agree. Exceptions to this may be if the person believed you were 16 or older, or the person believed they were married to you.

16 – no-one who is caring for you or supervising you can perform a sexual act with or in front of you, even if you agree. Exceptions to this may be if the person believed you were 17 or older, or the person believed they were married to you.

16 or 17 - no one who is caring for you or supervising you, can perform a sexual act with or in front of you, even if you agree. Exceptions to this may be if the person believed you were 18 or older, or the person believed they were married to you.

An older person can be charged with a sexual offence if they perform a sexual act in breach of these limits, even if you agree to it.

As well as the age limits the law says that two people can't have sex unless they both agree. If you don't agree and someone threatens you or touches you sexually they are breaking the law."

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## Sexual Health information

### Free and confidential advice and sexual health medical appointments

#### HIV and Sexual Health Connect Line

Free call: 1800 038 125

[www.connectline.com.au](http://www.connectline.com.au)

#### Melbourne Sexual Health Centre

[www.mshc.org.au](http://www.mshc.org.au)

Website lists services in your local area.

580 Swanston Street, Carlton

Telephone: 9347 0244

Free call: 1800 032 017

#### Adolescent Sexual Health websites

[www.yoursexhealth.org](http://www.yoursexhealth.org)

[www.reachout.com.au](http://www.reachout.com.au)

[www.somazone.com.au](http://www.somazone.com.au)

[www.safersex.com.au](http://www.safersex.com.au)

[www.thehormonefactory.com](http://www.thehormonefactory.com)

[www.coreoflife.org](http://www.coreoflife.org)

#### Victorian Catching online sexuality education website

[www.education.vic.gov.au/studentlearning/teachingresources/health/sexuality](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/studentlearning/teachingresources/health/sexuality)

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## Family Planning Victoria

Community Health Centres, sexual health check ups, same sex attracted youth support.

[www.fpv.org.au](http://www.fpv.org.au)

The Youth Centre @ Level 1, 94 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne.

Telephone 9654 4766 or toll free 1800 013 952

Family Planning Victoria medical clinics:

901 Whitehorse Road, Box Hill

Telephone: 9257 0100

Outreach Clinics:

Hoppers Crossing

Telephone: 9742 8155

Cranbourne

Telephone 5990 6789

Shepparton

Telephone: 5832 2460

## Local Councils Community Health Centres

See Melbourne Sexual Health Centre information

## Hepatitis C Council

[www.hepcvic.net.au](http://www.hepcvic.net.au)

Telephone: 9380 4688

Free call: 1800 703 003

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Useful websites for research projects and additional information

HIV/Hepatitis & STI Education & Resource Centre at The Alfred Hospital

[www.hivhepsti.info/](http://www.hivhepsti.info/)

People Living with HIV/AIDS Victoria Inc.

[www.plwhavictoria.org.au](http://www.plwhavictoria.org.au)

Victorian AIDS Council Inc.

[www.vicaids.asn.au](http://www.vicaids.asn.au)

National Association of People with AIDS Inc.

[www.napwa.org.au](http://www.napwa.org.au)

The living with HIV program – HIV Futures surveys

[www.latrobe.edu.au/hiv-futures/](http://www.latrobe.edu.au/hiv-futures/)

HIV/AIDS Positive stories – quizzes and resources for youth

[www.hivaids.webcentral.com.au](http://www.hivaids.webcentral.com.au)

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Burnet Research Institute, Melbourne

[www.burnet.edu.au](http://www.burnet.edu.au)

Department of Health Victoria

<http://hnp.dhs.vic.gov.au/>

Gay and Lesbian Switchboard

Confidential, free telephone counselling and support

Telephone: 9827 8544

Fee call: 1800 184 527

Police Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officer

Telephone: 9247 6944/5346

Ministerial Advisory Committee on Gay & Lesbian Health

[www.health.vic.gov/macglh](http://www.health.vic.gov/macglh)

Gay & Lesbian Health Victoria

[www.glhv.org.au](http://www.glhv.org.au)

Wayout – Rural Victorian Youth & Sexual Diversity Project

Same sex attracted youth and addressing homophobia in schools

[www.wayout.org.au](http://www.wayout.org.au)

Office for Youth (Victoria)

[www.youth.vic.gov.au](http://www.youth.vic.gov.au)

youth central (Victoria)

[www.youthcentral.vic.gov.au](http://www.youthcentral.vic.gov.au)

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Department of Education & Early Childhood Development

Knowledge Bank & Curriculum Planning Guidelines

[www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/knowledgebank/default.asp](http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/knowledgebank/default.asp)

Whole of School sexuality education program development for Victorian schools – Catching On-line

[www.education.vic.gov.au/studentlearning/teachingresources/health/sexuality](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/studentlearning/teachingresources/health/sexuality)

Equal Opportunity Commission Victoria

[www.equalopportunitycommission.vic.gov.au/index.asp](http://www.equalopportunitycommission.vic.gov.au/index.asp)

Department of Justice

[www.justice.vic.gov.au](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au)

Australasian Society of HIV Medicine

[www.ashm.org.au](http://www.ashm.org.au)

World AIDS Day Australia

[www.worldaidsday.org.au](http://www.worldaidsday.org.au)

Global Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (GNP+)

[www.gnpplus.net/](http://www.gnpplus.net/)

The Body – HIV information resource (USA)

[www.thebody.com](http://www.thebody.com)

AIDS Map (UK)

[www.aidsmap.com](http://www.aidsmap.com)

United Nations Development Program (UNDP) – HIV and development in the Asia Pacific Region (Thailand)

[www.hiv-development.org/](http://www.hiv-development.org/)

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World Health Organisation/ UNAIDS

[www.unaids.org](http://www.unaids.org)

Global Health

[www.globalhealthreportingh.org/diseaseinfo](http://www.globalhealthreportingh.org/diseaseinfo) HIV/AIDS

NB:

Many of these sites have a "links" page providing access to many other HIV/AIDS websites around the world

HIV/AIDS prevention and education posters and pamphlets

Victorian AIDS Council Health Promotion Team

Telephone: 9865 6700

Email: [Tex\\_McKenzie@vic aids.asn.au](mailto:Tex_McKenzie@vic aids.asn.au)

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**HIV and Sexual Health**  
A program of People Living With HIV AIDS Victoria Inc

Featuring the lived experience of the  
**Positive Speakers Bureau**

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