

## SHOULD I HAVE THE TEST?

If a person engages in high risk activities, they may want to have the test. Test results are kept confidential and many test sites will test anonymously. The results are NOT passed on to employers or insurance companies.

If you are considering having the test, you are strongly urged to get some counseling both before the test is carried out and after you get the test results back. Counseling should be carried out by a health professional who is trained in HIV / AIDS counseling and the interpretation of the HIV test.

## HOW IS HIV / AIDS TREATED?

At the present time there is no known cure for HIV/AIDS. The various illnesses of AIDS patients are treated as they arise, but this does not correct the underlying damage to the immune system. Several drugs are being used in combination and are helping people who have HIV/AIDS.

## CAN AIDS BE PREVENTED?

**YES.** Because the virus is only transmitted when infected blood or sexual fluids pass from one person INTO the body of another. Each person can take the steps necessary to avoid this exposure. AIDS is a matter of choice not chance.

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, LOCAL COUNSELING, AND TESTING SITES CALL:

**St. Clair County Health Department**  
3415 - 28th Street ● Port Huron  
Telephone: (810) 987-5300

**AIDS Partnership Michigan**  
**AIDS Hotline**  
1-800-872-AIDS or  
(313) 446-9800

**TDD for the hearing impaired**  
1-800-322-0849

Outside of Michigan call  
**U.S. Public Health Service**  
**National AIDS Hotline**  
1-800-342-AIDS  
(24 hr. recording)

*If you would like a speaker on HIV/AIDS,  
contact the*  
**St. Clair County Health Department**  
(810) 987-5300

# HIV / AIDS:

## A MATTER OF CHOICE NOT CHANCE



*This pamphlet has been produced  
by the St. Clair County Health Department*

## WHAT IS HIV and AIDS?

The immune system is the body's mechanism for recognizing and fighting off invading infections.

**Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)** attacks and destroys the body's immune system. A person who is infected with HIV is almost certain to eventually develop symptoms.

**AIDS** or **Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome** is the name given to combinations of diseases or syndromes, which may affect people who have been diagnosed with HIV.

At this time, HIV and AIDS are chronic conditions for which there is no cure.

## HOW DO YOU GET HIV?

The virus is passed from one person to another through infected blood, semen, vaginal secretions or breast milk. The blood or other infected fluid must then get into the blood stream of another person. Other body fluids, such as saliva, sweat, tears, urine or feces do not contain the virus. HIV cannot survive very long outside the body.

The most frightening thing about HIV is that it can be caught from individuals who appear healthy and show no symptoms of HIV infection. These are people who feel fine, yet are carrying the virus and giving it to others, often without realizing it. It can take as long as ten years or more for symptoms to appear. Some people may never develop symptoms. The infected person can infect others during that time, despite feeling well.

A person may be infected by HIV through the following high risk activities:

- Having unprotected sexual intercourse (oral, anal, or genital) with a person infected with HIV.
- Sharing needles.

- Receiving infected blood or blood products. Since 1986 tests for HIV have been used to make the blood supply safer. Every unit of donated blood with a positive test result is discarded.

A mother who is infected with HIV may give HIV to her baby during pregnancy, at birth, or through breast feeding.

## YOU DO NOT GET HIV FROM:

HIV is **NOT** transmitted through contact such as:

- being coughed on
- social kissing
- hugging
- sitting in the same room
- eating food prepared by someone who has HIV or AIDS
- the bite of a mosquito or other insects
- using the same bathroom toilet seats
- swimming pools
- donating blood
- using the same telephones, computers, or doorknobs
- living with someone who has AIDS
- sharing eating utensils

## HOW TO BE HEALTHY

The following are suggestions for keeping you and your immune system as healthy as possible:

- Reduce your number of sexual partners
- Get to know your sexual partners
- Avoid alcohol, cocaine, marijuana, heroin, crack, and other recreational drugs.
- Avoid tobacco use
- Eat a balanced diet
- Exercise regularly
- Get enough rest
- Deal positively with stress
- Develop a support system of family and friends

## HOW CAN THE RISK OF HIV INFECTION BE REDUCED?

- Do not have sexual contact.
- Practice **safer** sex by using condoms and water base lubricants for rectal, vaginal, or oral intercourse.
- **DO NOT** have oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse with multiple partners or with people who have multiple partners. The more sexual partners you have, the greater your chances of becoming infected with HIV.
- **DO NOT** have sex with prostitutes, or IV drug users either male or female.
- Women who are sex partners of risk group members or who use IV drugs should consider the risk to their babies before becoming pregnant.
- **DO NOT** share needles.
- **DO NOT** inject **ANY** non-prescription drugs.
- **DO NOT** take drugs (such as steroids or cortisone) unless prescribed by a doctor. These drugs may weaken the immune system.

## IS THERE A TEST? TO SEE IF I HAVE HIV?

- A blood test can determine the presence of HIV antibodies, but it can take 3 weeks to 3 months after being infected to show positive on the HIV test. Some people may not show positive on the HIV test for as long as 6 months after infection.

**HIV / AIDS IS A MATTER OF CHOICE NOT CHANCE**