

What Is HIV?

HIV is the virus that causes AIDS. People who have HIV in their bodies have HIV infection, or HIV.

- ▼ HIV is a disease with many stages. People with HIV may have no symptoms, a few symptoms or many serious symptoms.
- ▼ People can have HIV for many years without feeling or looking sick. They may not even know they have HIV. But they can still pass the virus on to others.
- ▼ Over time, HIV damages the body's immune system. The immune system protects the body from disease.
- ▼ When the immune system gets very weak, other diseases and infections can enter the body. This stage of HIV is called AIDS.

How Do People Get HIV?

HIV lives in semen, vaginal fluids, blood and breast milk of a person with HIV. It can be passed from one person to another through these infected fluids.

- ▼ HIV can be passed during vaginal, oral or anal sex.
 - ▼ HIV can be passed while sharing needles and equipment to inject drugs.
 - ▼ HIV can be passed by needles used for tattoos and piercing or to inject vitamins or steroids.
 - ▼ Health workers caring for people with HIV can get HIV from needle-stick injuries.
 - ▼ HIV can be passed from a mother to her baby during pregnancy, childbirth or breastfeeding.
- Before 1985, some people got HIV from infected blood transfusions. Now the blood supply in the United States is tested. So the chances of getting HIV this way are very, very small.

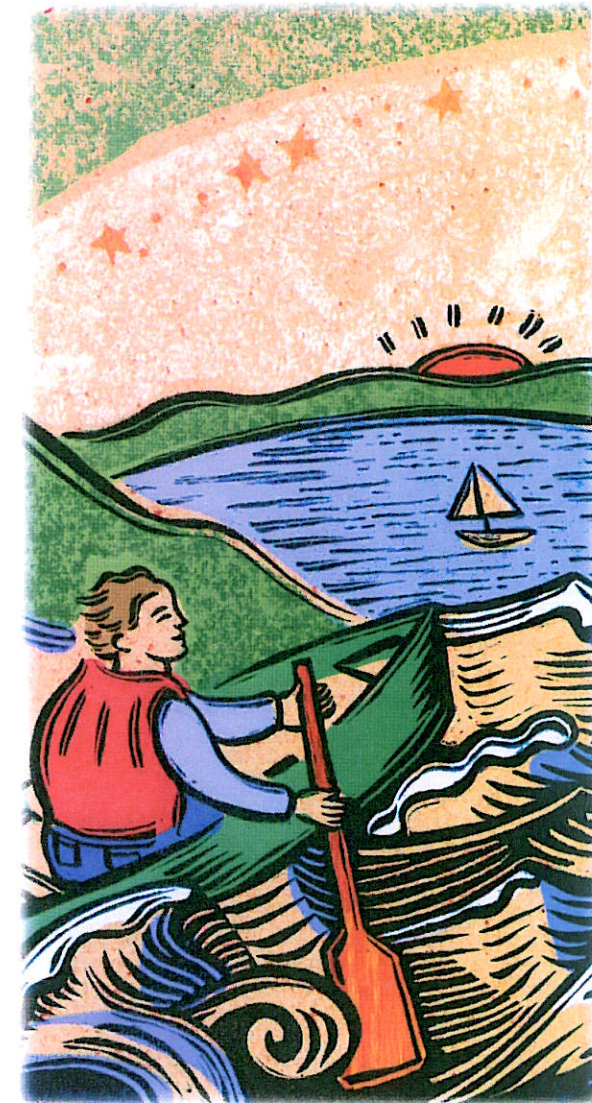
HIV is not passed by:

- ▼ donating blood
- ▼ hugging, dry kissing or sharing food
- ▼ telephones, toilet seats, towels or eating utensils
- ▼ tears, saliva, sweat or urine
- ▼ mosquitoes or other insects

Protect Yourself!

- ▼ Use a new latex condom and a water-based lubricant every time for vaginal or anal sex.
- ▼ Don't use oil-based lubricants. Hand creams, massage oils, Vaseline, etc., can cause the condom to break.
- ▼ Use a new latex condom every time for oral sex on a man.
- ▼ For oral sex on a woman or oral/anal sex on a man or woman, use a barrier such as a dental dam, a latex condom cut and rolled out flat, or plastic food wrap. Use a new barrier each time.
- ▼ People who are allergic to latex can use plastic (polyurethane) condoms. These come in both male and female styles.
- ▼ Don't have sex when you're drunk or high. Using alcohol or other drugs affects judgment and can lead to unsafe sex.

HIV Facts



This brochure is not intended as a substitute for your health professional's opinion or care.
Written by Nora Krantzler, PhD, MPH.
© 1996 ETR Associates. Revised 2000. Reviewed 2002.
All rights reserved. It is a violation of U.S. copyright law to reproduce any portion of this publication.