



HIV/AIDS



The equal opportunity illness

So much has been said about AIDS but much is misunderstood – such as whose illness is it anyway? AIDS does not belong to any one sex, age, race or country.

HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, is spread through direct contact with blood and bodily fluids. The virus can be passed on during unprotected sex and while sharing needles or by receiving blood from an infected person. You can have the HIV virus and not even know it - not feel one bit sick. Many women with HIV discover it only after their children are found to have the virus.

If you find out about HIV infection before pregnancy, you can get information on choices about birth control and about having a baby. During pregnancy, there are treatments that can reduce the risk of passing on the virus to your baby.

Not my problem?

“Not my problem” should not be your first response to a caution about HIV and AIDS, unless you have read the information below and tests have confirmed you are safe to take the next step toward pregnancy. Know your risks for HIV and ask yourself key questions that will let you enter into pregnancy worry-free.

Must-see facts

- ❖ An infected woman can spread HIV to her baby during pregnancy and delivery.
- ❖ More and more Canadian women are becoming infected with HIV. Canadian women in their childbearing years are at the greatest risk of becoming infected with HIV.
- ❖ A high number of lifetime sexual partners can put a person at greater risk for developing HIV and other sexually transmitted infections – but even people with only 1 sexual partner can be at risk.
- ❖ Little knowledge about your partner’s sexual history and health may put you at risk for infection.
- ❖ Having another sexually transmitted disease such as chlamydia or herpes can increase your risk of also being infected with HIV.
- ❖ Condom use offers important infection protection to people having sex.
- ❖ Injection drug users are at greater risk for HIV. Using a clean (sterile) needle each time and not sharing needles can make it safer.

Risky business?

HIV attacks a person’s immune system. This makes it hard to fight infections. But if you have HIV, you may not have symptoms. And there is a 25% chance that a mother with untreated HIV can pass the infection to her baby. To know whether you need to be concerned about being infected, answer these statements below:

	Yes	No	Unsure	
I have always had safer sex by insisting on condom use every time.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>If you responded yes to all statements, you are protecting your own health and taking action to create a healthier pregnancy in the future. Great!</i>
My partner and I have only had sex with each other.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
I have recently been tested for sexually transmitted infections and HIV.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
My partner has recently been tested for sexually transmitted diseases and HIV. .	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
I do not share sex toys.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
I always use clean needles (ignore if not using needles).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
My partner always uses clean needles (ignore if partner does not use needles). .	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
I did not have a blood transfusion before 1985.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
My partner did not have a blood transfusion before 1985.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	



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The bodyguard

If you answered “no” or “not sure” to any of the previous statements, think about taking one or more of the following actions to stay as healthy as possible:

- ❖ I will talk with my current partner.
- ❖ I will talk to any partner about past practices and my desire to practice safer sex.
- ❖ I will make appointments to discuss HIV testing with my health care provider or at the sexual health clinic.
- ❖ I will ask my partner to talk to a health care provider or call the sexual health clinic.
- ❖ I will arrange to get clean needles and not share with anyone.

For years, *before* giving birth, women have been screened for hepatitis B, syphilis, and rubella (German measles). Voluntary HIV testing is also offered to women who are planning a pregnancy or who are already pregnant. You have the choice to get HIV tests ordered, using your name or not. It is important to know that you can get tested any time. But *before* pregnancy or early in pregnancy are the best times to take steps to protect both you and your unborn baby.

You do not have to give your name if you want to be tested for HIV. Anonymous testing is available.

FOR HELP CLOSE TO HOME CONTACT:

Sexual health clinic: _____

Health care provider: _____

Local public health unit: Call INFOline at 1-800-268-1154 / 416-341-5518

Ontario HIV/AIDS and Sexual Health Information Line: 1-800-668-2437

Canadian HIV/AIDS Information Centre: 1-877-999-7740 or www.aidsida.cpha.ca

Ontario HIV/AIDS: Main Line (information about needle exchange programs and STDs and injection drug use): 1-800-686-7544

Motherisk, HIV and HIV Treatment in Pregnancy: 1-888-246-5840 or www.motherisk.org