



## Tips for Teens: The Truth About AIDS

### → Get the Facts...

**AIDS--Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome--is caused by HIV, the Human Immunodeficiency Virus.** HIV impairs your immune system, making it less resistant to diseases and infections. HIV is transmitted through exposure to the bodily fluids of someone infected with HIV. This exposure most commonly occurs during unprotected sex, by sharing needles, through blood transfusions, or by contact with open wounds. Babies born to women with HIV can also become infected.

**It's not a "gay thing."** HIV infections among all teenagers and young adults are increasing. Also, nearly one-fourth of AIDS cases among adolescents and adults under age 25 stem from injection drug use.

**Alcohol and drugs affect your self-control.** Alcohol and illicit drugs lower your inhibitions and impair your judgment. Drinking and drug use can lead to risky behaviors you're less likely to do if sober, including having unprotected sex. This increases your risk for exposure to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

**Any drug use increases the risks for HIV/AIDS.** Non-injection drugs also contribute to the spread of HIV/AIDS when users trade sex for drugs or money or when their judgment and decision-making skills are impaired.

### → Before You Risk It...

**Get the facts.** Not having sexual intercourse is the most effective way to avoid STDs, including HIV/AIDS. For those who choose to be sexually active, the following HIV prevention activities can be effective:

- Engaging in sexual activity that does not involve vaginal, anal, or oral sex
- Having intercourse with only one uninfected partner
- Using latex condoms every time you have sex

**Stay informed.** Even though more effective drugs are now used to treat HIV/AIDS, there is no cure or vaccine.

**Know the risks.** Even tobacco use impacts HIV/AIDS. Smokers with the HIV virus develop full-blown AIDS twice as quickly as nonsmokers.

## Know the Signs...

How can you tell if you or someone else may already have HIV? If you have not shared a needle or had unprotected sex, it is very unlikely that you have HIV. The only way to be certain is to be tested. Most people with HIV do not have any visible symptoms for many years. Once symptoms do begin to show, some of the more common ones include:

- Rapid weight loss
- Profuse night sweats
- Ongoing, unexplained fatigue
- Swollen lymph glands
- Diarrhea that lasts longer than a week
- White spots or blemishes in the mouth or throat
- Pneumonia

Do not assume you are infected if you have any of these symptoms. Each of these symptoms can easily be related to other illnesses. Again, the only way to determine for sure whether you are infected with HIV is to be tested.

What can you do to help someone whose substance abuse problem is putting them at risk for HIV/AIDS? Be a real friend. You might even save a life. Encourage your friend to stop using substances or seek professional help. For information and referrals, call the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information at 800-729-6686.

For more information go to [ncadi.samhsa.gov](http://ncadi.samhsa.gov)

## Q&A

**Q.** Can you get HIV/AIDS from deep kissing or from someone's sweat?

**A.** No. There are no known cases of HIV transmission through sweat or saliva. HIV is primarily transmitted in blood, semen, or vaginal fluid during unprotected sex or from sharing needles.

**Q.** If you already have the HIV virus, does it really matter whether you drink and use drugs?

**A.** Yes. Being smoke-free, clean, and sober improves your chances of staying healthy longer.

**Q.** Who is most likely to get HIV/AIDS?

**A.** Anyone who has unprotected sex, shares needles, or exchanges bodily fluids or blood with an infected person is at risk. HIV is a virus. AIDS is a disease. Viruses do not care about age, race, or sexual orientation.

**The bottom line:** If you know someone who is risking exposure to HIV/AIDS, urge him or her to stop or get more information. If your behavior places you at risk for exposure to HIV/AIDS-stop! If you have already possibly been exposed to HIV/AIDS, get tested and follow your doctor's instructions. The longer you ignore the real facts, the more chances you take with your life.

Talk to your parents, a doctor, a counselor, a teacher, or another adult you trust.

Do it today!

## Info

To learn more about HIV/AIDS or obtain referrals to programs in your community, contact:

SAMHSA's National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information  
800-729-6686  
TDD 800-487-4889

linea gratis en español 877-767-8432  
Web site: [ncadi.samhsa.gov](http://ncadi.samhsa.gov)

Curious about the TV ads of the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign? Check out the Web site at <http://www.freevibe.com> or visit the Office of National Drug Control Policy Web site at <http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov>.