

## WHAT IS HIV?

- HIV is short for **Human Immunodeficiency Virus**. HIV attacks the body's immune system, making it hard to fight off infections.
- HIV particularly attacks the white blood cells called CD4 cells, which sets the immune system in motion when infections enter the body. HIV infects CD4 cells and uses them to make new copies of HIV which go on to infect more cells.
- The lower a person's CD4 count, the weaker their immune system will be.

## WHAT IS AIDS?

- AIDS stands for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome.
- When a person's immune system has been damaged he or she is open to other illnesses, especially infections and cancers, many of which would not normally be a threat.
- Before effective treatments, if someone with HIV got one of these illnesses the person was said to have AIDS.
- However, it is no longer a widely-used term. Doctors may instead call this 'late stage' or 'advanced HIV infection'.



## CAN YOU TREAT HIV?

There is no vaccine or cure for HIV. However, anti-HIV drugs are available, and taking a combination of anti-HIV drugs (combination therapy) can slow down the damaging effect of HIV on the immune system.

## HOW IS HIV PASSED ON?

For someone to become infected, a sufficient amount of HIV must get into their blood. The body fluids, which contain enough HIV to infect someone are **blood, semen, vaginal fluids including menstrual blood, and breast milk**.

Saliva, sweat and urine do **NOT** contain enough virus to infect someone. HIV **CANNOT** pass through intact external skin, or through the air like a cold or flu virus.



**The main routes of transmission in the UK are:**

- Through sex without a condom - HIV can pass from one person to another through unprotected anal or vaginal sex. There is only a small risk of transmission through oral sex.
- Through injecting drug use - HIV can be passed on by using needles or syringes that someone with HIV has already used.
- From mother to baby - a pregnant woman may transmit the virus to her baby before or during birth, or HIV can be passed on during breastfeeding.
- Through organ transplant, blood transfusion or blood products. However since 1985, all blood and tissue donations in the UK have been screened for HIV.

## REDUCE YOUR RISK.

**Protect yourself and those you love by:**

- **Using condoms.** Condoms can protect you and your partner from HIV, many STIs and unintended pregnancy.

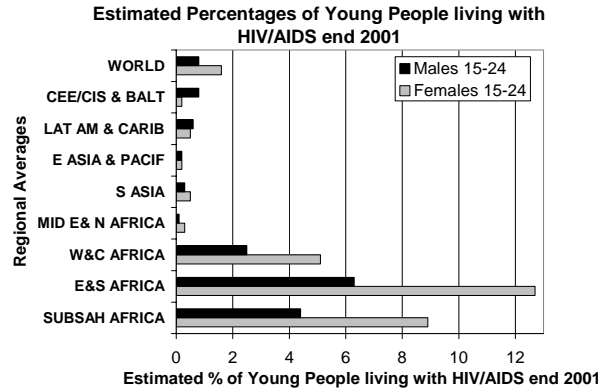


- **Not now.** There's nothing wrong with not having sex. There are safe ways of being intimate, and expressing love without having sexual intercourse. Skip the sex and find other ways to make each other feel good. Choosing not to have sex doesn't mean you're never going to – maybe you're not ready, need a break, or forgot the condoms.
- **1:1.** You've met the ideal person, you know each other's HIV and STI test results, and you trust each other to stay faithful. Commit to having sex with no one else but each other.
- **Get tested** - be aware of your own HIV status.
- **Don't use dirty needles** to inject drugs.

If you think you may be at risk of HIV, it's probably worth getting tested for other STIs at the same time.

## WHO IS POSITIVE?

Virtually all countries in the world are infected with AIDS. Today 40 million are living with AIDS & 20 million have died since the first cases were identified in 1981.



Source: UNICEF, 2002

It is estimated that there are currently 50,000 people living with HIV in the UK, the highest number ever. Studies by the Health Protection Agency, based on blood samples taken from the general population, estimate that about a third of these people have not yet been diagnosed.

In the UK, there were 5,864 HIV cases diagnosed in 2003.

This represents an increase in the number of cases from 2002 of 20%.

Source: [www.nat.org.uk](http://www.nat.org.uk)

Globally, an estimated 11.8 million young people aged 15-24 are living with HIV/AIDS. Young people world wide have inherited a lethal legacy that is killing them & their friends, their brothers, sisters, parents, teachers & role models.

Source: Student Stop AIDS Campaign, SPW Report, 2003 & [www.tht.org.uk](http://www.tht.org.uk)

To find out **where to get tested** locally, or just for more advice, visit 'the clinic' at:  
[www.playingsafely.co.uk](http://www.playingsafely.co.uk)

Main source: [www.tht.org.uk](http://www.tht.org.uk)

student stop **AIDS** campaign

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