

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)

Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS)

What is HIV?

- The virus called Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) causes AIDS by damaging the body's immune system which normally protects people from disease.

What is AIDS?

- A viral syndrome which affects the immune system making HIV infected persons susceptible to various diseases that would not harm a healthy immune system. It may take an HIV infected person up to 10 years before showing symptoms of AIDS.
- AIDS has a very high death rate. Currently there is no cure.

HIV/AIDS Prevention Overview

- Persons infected with HIV live in every state in the United States and every country in the world.
- People of every race, gender, age and economic status can be infected with HIV/AIDS.
- Infected people who do not feel sick or look sick can transmit the virus.
- Most people with HIV/AIDS are adults, but many infected adults were exposed to the virus when they were teenagers.
- One in every four new cases of HIV in the U. S. occurs among youth under the age of 25.

How do People Get Infected with HIV?

- Body fluids that are known to transmit HIV are blood, semen, vaginal secretions, and occasionally breast milk.
- Through direct exposure to blood semen or vaginal secretions that are infected with HIV.
- From person to person through sexual intercourse with an infected person.
- Through sharing of injection drug needles and syringes used for "shooting" drugs.
- HIV infected pregnant women can pass the virus on to their children before, during or after birth.
- Receiving infected blood (extremely rare in the U. S.). Since the spring of 1985, blood banks have tested donor's blood for HIV. If the blood test is positive, the blood is destroyed.

Is HIV Spread by Casual Contact?

No! HIV is not spread by casual contact.

People do not get HIV by:

- Shaking hands
- Hugging and kissing
- Sneezing, coughing, spitting
- Sharing food, water fountains
- Books or supplies
- Swimming, playing sports
- Pets or mosquito bites
- Toilet seats, bath tubs, sinks, telephone
- Working or going to class with an infected person
- Being a friend to an infected person

What are the Symptoms?

Many people infected with HIV have no symptoms and feel well. HIV/AIDS may develop into persistent symptoms, lasting two weeks or more which may include:

- Fever
- Fatigue
- Unexplained weight loss
- Night sweats
- Unexplained diarrhea
- Swollen glands (lymph nodes) in the neck, armpits and groin
- Dry cough not due to smoking
- Unexplained skin lesions
- Persistent yeast infections

Anyone who has these symptoms for more than two weeks should see a doctor.

How is HIV/AIDS Prevented?

HIV/AIDS is difficult to catch if you avoid risky behavior:

- Avoid actions which place one at risk or in danger of harm.
- Practice abstinence from sexual intercourse before marriage.
- Never share needles, syringes, tattoo equipment, ear piercing needles, razors, or toothbrushes.
- Avoid alcohol consumption. It can lead to poor judgment and lack of self control.

Is There a Test for HIV?

- There is a test which will tell whether a person has been infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.
- This test looks for “antibodies” which the body produces to fight the HIV/AIDS virus.
- This antibody test is used to screen donated blood so that blood used for transfusions is safe.
- A positive test does not mean that a person has AIDS. It simply means he or she has been infected with HIV.

Where Can I Get More Information?

- The Washington State Aids Hotline
1-800-272-AIDS
- Superintendent of Public Instruction
AIDS Education
360-725-6364
- United Community Aids Network (UCAN)
360-352-2375

NORTH THURSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

HIV/AIDS

Facts for Students,
Parents and Educators

Grades 5-12

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