

Sex & HIV

HIV can be transmitted through sex, but there are lots of ways to prevent HIV and keep yourself and your partner healthy.

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Sources:
www.avert.org/fact-sheet-sources



The most common way for HIV to be transmitted is through vaginal or anal sex.



Fluids such as semen (cum or pre-cum), vaginal and anal fluids, and blood can contain HIV, which can pass into another person's body during sex.



There are lots of ways to prevent you or your partners from getting HIV through sex.

What's the risk of getting HIV through vaginal, anal, and oral sex?



Both male and female partners can get HIV from vaginal sex. The risk of getting and passing on HIV through vaginal sex increases during menstruation.



The risk of HIV transmission through anal sex is higher than vaginal sex. This is because the lining of the anus is thinner and more easily torn, providing an easier route for HIV to enter the body.



Oral sex has a very low HIV risk. HIV can only be transmitted if you have cuts or sores around your mouth or genitals.



You can't get HIV from kissing or hand jobs.

How can I prevent HIV transmission?

There are more ways than ever to prevent HIV transmission. You can combine options to make sure you and your partner both feel in control.

CONDOMS

Condoms prevent HIV transmission by providing a physical barrier that stops contact with the other person's body fluids.

Two types of condom:



External (male)
condoms fit on the
erect penis



Internal (female)
condoms fit inside
the vagina or anus

- ✓ For condoms to work, you must use them correctly every time.
- ✓ Condoms also protect you from other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and prevent pregnancy.
- ✓ You can use condoms for vaginal, anal and oral sex, and if you are sharing sex toys.

*Need more information?
See our 'Condoms & HIV' factsheet.*





PREP

PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) is a pill which, when taken properly, prevents you getting HIV.



PrEP is recommended for people who feel they are at higher risk of HIV. PrEP puts you in control and is effective whether you have vaginal or anal sex.



PrEP isn't available everywhere, so speak to your healthcare worker to find out if it is an option for you.

TREATMENT AS PREVENTION

If you are living with HIV, antiretroviral treatment lowers the amount of HIV in your body, making it less likely that you will pass HIV on.



If your viral load is undetectable (so low that it cannot be detected in normal blood tests) you cannot pass on HIV through sex.

U=U



To know if you are undetectable, you must have your viral load monitored regularly.



TESTING

Knowing your HIV status puts you in control of your sexual health.



If you know you're positive you can take HIV treatment to stay healthy and reduce the risk of passing HIV on.



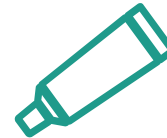
It's also important to have regular check-ups for other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) as these can also increase the chance of getting or passing on HIV.

Need more information?
Read our 'HIV testing' factsheet.



Lubricant

Lubricant/lube is a liquid that reduces friction during sex.



- ✓ Lube reduces the chance of a condom breaking, and makes tears or damage to the anus or vagina less likely.
- ✓ Look for water or silicone-based lube, as oil-based lube can damage latex condoms.
- ✓ Lube is especially important for anal sex, as the anus is more delicate and does not self-lubricate.

'Safe sex' myths

- ✗ The contraceptive pill prevents pregnancy, but has no protection against STIs or HIV.
- ✗ The pulling out method, where you withdraw the penis before ejaculation, doesn't prevent HIV, as pre-cum and vaginal/anal fluids can contain the virus too.
- ✗ Washing after sex does not prevent HIV.

What should I do if I've been exposed to HIV?



If you think you've been exposed to HIV, speak to a healthcare worker as soon as possible. They may suggest that you take post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) which is a course of drugs to prevent HIV infection.



PEP must be taken within 72 hours of possible exposure.

Need more information? Read our
'Emergency HIV treatment' factsheet.



Know your rights

You have the right to:

- ✓ use a condom or other forms of prevention
- ✓ use contraception
- ✓ take a confidential STI or HIV test.