

- **Don't inject drugs.** If you do, never share needles, syringes, filters, water or spoons. Wash your hands or swab your fingers before touching another person's injection site. Always use new, clean needles and syringes. You can get these from most chemists, needle and syringe exchange outlets, and country hospitals after hours.
- **Limit your sex partners.** The fewer people you have sex with, the lower the risk of having sex with someone who has HIV. Have a long-term relationship where neither of you is already infected, and neither of you have other partners.
- **Before having any body art** (such as tattooing or piercing) make sure the body artist uses only sterilised equipment, and new razors and needles each time.
- **Don't share personal items**, such as razors, toothbrushes and dental floss.
- **Have regular STI check-ups.**
- **Alcohol and other drugs can affect your sexual behaviour.** If you are under the influence of alcohol or other drugs, it may be better to avoid sex.

Talking about STIs can be difficult, but any person you have sex with has a right to know if you have an STI. Discuss it when you are feeling relaxed and confident, not just before you have sex. Your partner will appreciate your honesty and that you don't want to infect him/her. You have the right to know if they are infected, too.

Where to go

Confidential tests and treatment are available from your GP or a doctor of your choice or you could visit one of these metropolitan health services.

(Most are free, please telephone first to see if you need an appointment):

Sexual Health Helpline
(08) 9227 6178 or
1800 198 205 toll free
sexhelp@fpwa.org.au

Fremantle Hospital
Infectious Diseases, B2 Clinic
(08) 9431 2149

FPWA-Sexual Health Services
NORTHBRIDGE
(08) 9227 6177 or 1800 198 205 toll free

Quarry Health Centre (For under 25's)
FREMANTLE
(08) 9430 4544

Royal Perth Hospital
Sexual Health Clinic
(08) 9224 2178

Women's Health Care Services
NORTHBRIDGE
(09) 9227 8122 or 1800 998 399 toll free

Derbarl Yerrigan Health Service
PERTH
(08) 9421 3888

And some regional Population Health Units and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services.

For more information contact

WA AIDS Council
(08) 9482 0000, AIDSline (08) 9482 0044
www.waids.com

HealthInfo 1300 135 030

Communicable Disease Control Directorate
Department of Health (08) 9388 4999
www.public.health.wa.gov.au
www.getthefacts.health.wa.gov.au

Regional Population Health Units
(those in bold provide clinical services)

Albany	(08) 9842 7500
Broome	(08) 9194 1630
Bunbury	(08) 9781 2350
Carnarvon	(08) 9941 0560
Geraldton	(08) 9956 1985
Kalgoorlie-Boulder	(08) 9080 8200
Northam	(08) 9622 4320
South Hedland	(08) 9172 8333

This document can be made available in alternative formats such as computer disc, audio tape or Braille, on request.

HIV/AIDS

Your
sexual
health

What is HIV/AIDS?

HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus. HIV is an infection that attacks the immune system and weakens the body's natural way to fight infections. Without treatment, after some years, a person who has HIV can't fight off some infections and cancers. This stage of HIV is called AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome). You can have HIV without having AIDS.

There is no cure for HIV. A person with it can pass HIV on to others for the rest of their life.

How can I catch it?

There are 3 main ways to catch HIV:

- Unprotected anal, vaginal or oral sex with an infected person. Unprotected sex is sex without using a condom or dental dam.
- When infected blood gets into another person's bloodstream.
- From an infected woman to her baby, during pregnancy or birth, or from breastfeeding.

Unsafe behaviours

- The highest risk for both males and females is unprotected anal sex.
- Unprotected vaginal sex is also a risk.
- Sharing injecting equipment, particularly needles and syringes, can put HIV directly into your bloodstream. You are also at risk if your sexual partner shares injecting equipment, even if you don't.

- Unprotected oral sex is a risk, particularly if the mouth or genital area has any cuts or sores.

How you can't get HIV/AIDS

You can't catch HIV from everyday social contact, such as shaking hands, sharing a glass, or hugging and kissing. Saliva, tears or sweat are not infectious.

You are not at risk in most work places and schools/colleges. However, where work, study or sport could include contact with blood and body fluids there may be some risk. Always follow basic hygiene; this includes proper hand washing, and safe handling of body fluids such as blood spills.

Signs and symptoms

Soon after being infected with HIV, some people feel as if they have the flu: fever, headache, tiredness and a rash. Others may not have any symptoms. That's why, if you could be at risk, an HIV test is the ONLY way to know if you've been infected.

People with HIV can feel and look healthy. Many don't realise they have it because they don't see or feel anything wrong. Without knowing it, they can pass HIV on to their partners.

As the virus keeps attacking the immune system, a person will develop symptoms of the disease. These include constant tiredness, swollen glands, rapid weight loss, night sweats, memory loss and diarrhoea.

These symptoms can last for a long time. When the immune system is badly damaged, cancers, other infections, and brain damage can occur. This is called AIDS.

Checking it out

The only way to see if you have HIV is with a blood test. However, for a short period just after HIV enters the body, it can't be picked up with a test. So if your result is negative, you will need to have the test again after 3 months.

If you are having a test, you will be given counselling before and after to make sure that you fully understand what both a positive and a negative result mean. The doctor will give you the test results face-to-face, not by phone or letter. All information about the test will be kept confidential (private).

If you do have HIV, all your sexual partners will also need to be checked. This is always done carefully, respecting everyone's confidentiality.

Treatment

Currently, there is no cure for HIV. However, the illness can be managed. Many people with HIV live for years, with daily treatment. This is why, if you are at risk, you need to get tested early.

Pregnant women can get treatment to reduce the chances of the baby getting HIV – you must tell your doctor if you're pregnant and have HIV.

There are services for people with HIV that provide medical, social, emotional and other forms of support – some are listed in this pamphlet.

Protecting yourself and your partner

The safest ways to protect against HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are to:

- **Always practice safe sex.** Safe sex means avoiding sexual contact where the semen, blood or vaginal fluids of one person passes directly into the body of another person. Try alternatives to penetrative sex, and ways to have sexual enjoyment, without putting yourself and your partner at risk.
- **Always use condoms or dental dams during sexual intercourse and oral sex.** Condoms and dental dams, if used correctly with a water-based lubricant, help prevent fluids passing from one person to another. Always use a condom or dental dam until you are totally sure that both you and your partner do not have an STI.

