



Your sexual health HIV and AIDS

- **If you inject drugs, 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, sterile needles and syringes. You can get these from most chemists, needle and syringe exchange outlets, and at country hospitals after hours.
- **Before considering any body art** (such as tattooing or piercing) make sure the body artist uses only sterilised equipment, and new razors, inks and needles each time.
- **Avoid sharing personal items** which may have traces of blood on them, such as razors and toothbrushes.
- **Alcohol and other drugs can affect your decision making abilities and also your sexual behaviour.** If you are under the influence of alcohol or other drugs, it may be safer to avoid having sex.
- **If you think you have been exposed to HIV recently, you might be eligible for post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP).** PEP is a prescribed course of medication, which must be taken **as soon as possible and within 72 hours (three days)** of exposure to HIV. For more information call the 24 hour PEP Line on 1300 767 161.

Talking about HIV

Talking about HIV can be difficult, but if you are HIV-positive, you should think about talking to your sex partner before you have sex.

Whether or not you decide to tell your sex partner that you have HIV, you must always practice safer sex. Using condoms with water-based lubricant is the best way to prevent the spread of HIV.

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:

Fremantle Hospital

South Terrace Clinic
9431 2149

Royal Perth Hospital

Sexual Health Clinic
9224 2178

Sexual Health Quarters

Northbridge
9227 6177

Women's Health and Family Services

Northbridge
6330 5400

Joondalup

9300 1566 or

1800 998 399 toll free

M Clinic (for men who have sex with men)

West Perth
9227 0734

Derbarl Yerrigan Health Service

Perth
9421 3888

Some regional Population Health Units and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services also offer confidential tests and treatments.

For more information contact

WA AIDS Council

9482 0000, AIDSLine 9482 0044

waaid.com

WA PrEP Info Line 1800 671 130

PEP Line

1300 767 161 for 24 hour PEP information and referral

Sexual Health Helpline

9227 6178 or

1800 198 205 toll free from land lines

or email: sexhelp@shq.org.au

healthdirect on 1800 022 222

Department of Health

healthywa.wa.gov.au

couldihaveit.com.au

Regional Population Health Units

those in bold below provide clinical services

Albany 9842 7500

Broome 9194 1630

Bunbury 9781 2350

Carnarvon 9941 0506

Geraldton 9956 1985

Kalgoorlie-Boulder 9080 8200

Northam 9622 4320

South Hedland 9174 1660



This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with disability.

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What are HIV and AIDS?

HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is a virus which weakens a person's immune system and makes it hard to fight off infections.

There is no cure for HIV, but it can be managed by daily medication. People living with HIV, and taking daily medication, can lead long and healthy lives. If left untreated, HIV can cause AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome). AIDS occurs when the body's immune system is weakened and is unable to fight off infections and illnesses effectively.

It is important to remember that HIV is not the same as AIDS. Most people living with HIV in Australia who are on effective treatment do not have AIDS.

How is HIV spread?

HIV is spread when body fluids containing the virus, such as blood, semen, vaginal fluid, anal fluid or breast milk, enter the bloodstream of a person who does not have HIV. This can happen through:

- unsafe sexual practices, mainly unprotected anal or vaginal sex
- sharing injecting equipment, particularly needles and syringes
- the natural transfer of fluids from a woman who is HIV-positive to her baby during pregnancy, birth or breastfeeding
- unsterile body piercing and tattooing
- unsafe medical or dental procedures (especially in countries that do not have regulations for HIV testing and prevention).

You are also at risk if your sexual partner shares injecting equipment, even if you don't.

Unprotected oral sex may be a risk if there are any cuts or sores in and around the mouth or genital area.

How you can't get HIV

HIV cannot be spread through everyday social contact, such as shaking hands, sharing a glass, sharing food or drink or hugging and kissing. Saliva, tears, sweat and urine do not carry HIV. You cannot get HIV from insect or animal bites or by using the same toilet as a person with HIV.

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

What are the signs and symptoms of HIV?

Soon after HIV infection, some people feel as if they have the flu, with symptoms such as fever, headache, tiredness and/or a rash. Some people, however, may not have any symptoms.

You can have HIV and feel and look healthy. Many people do not realise they have HIV because they do not see or feel anything wrong. Without knowing it, you can pass HIV on to your sexual partners or to people with whom you inject drugs.

As the virus continues to attack the immune system, a person will start to develop symptoms. These can include constant tiredness, swollen glands, rapid weight loss, night sweats, and diarrhoea.

Without effective treatment these symptoms can progress to the point where the immune system becomes fragile and susceptible to AIDS.

How do I know if I have HIV?

Having a blood test is the only way to find out if you have HIV. However, for a short period just after HIV enters the body, it cannot be picked up with a test. So if your first test result is negative, you will need to have another test after three months.

Before and after a test, you will be given information and be able to ask questions, to make sure that you understand what both a positive and a negative result mean. All your information will be kept private.

If you do have HIV, all your sexual or injecting partners will need to be contacted so they can get counselling, testing, and treatment if necessary. This is always done carefully, respecting everyone's confidentiality.

How can I live a healthy and fulfilling life with HIV?

If you have HIV you can lead a full and healthy life. There is currently no cure for HIV, but like many other conditions it can be managed with daily treatment.

HIV treatment can lead to a person having an 'undetectable viral load'. This does not mean that HIV is no longer inside the body or that the person is cured, but that the amount of HIV in the blood is too small for tests to detect. When a person living with HIV has maintained an undetectable viral load for six months or more, there is effectively no risk of transmitting HIV sexually to others

People living with HIV (also referred to as being 'HIV-positive') can have normal relationships, including having sex, and having children if they choose. With effective treatment today, HIV-positive people can have HIV-negative children. If you or your

partner has HIV, it is best to talk with your doctor about options for practising safer sex, or for having children.

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

How can HIV be prevented?

You can protect yourself and your partner against HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) by following this advice:

- **Always use condoms with water-based lubricant when you have sex.** Condoms are the best way to protect both of you from HIV and other STIs.
- **If you are in a relationship, ensure that both you and your partner have been tested and are aware of each other's HIV status.** If one partner is HIV-positive and the other is HIV-negative, the risk of HIV transmission can be minimised by:
 - ensuring that the HIV-positive partner is on treatment and has an undetectable viral load
 - using condoms and lubricant
 - getting tested and treated early for STIs like chlamydia, gonorrhoea or syphilis
 - asking your doctor whether you would benefit from taking HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP). PrEP is a daily medication to prevent HIV infection in people who don't have HIV but are at ongoing risk of getting HIV.
- **If you are having casual sex** (sex with different people on a regular basis), then get regular STI checks.