

## TRANSMISSION / REINFECTION / PREVENTION

### TRANSMISSION

HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is a virus that can cause AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) once it enters the human body.

For there to be transmission, it is necessary for two things to occur:

1. There needs to be sufficient liquid or fluid containing HIV to produce transmission.

These TRANSMISSION FLUIDS can be:

- Blood
- Semen
- Vaginal fluid
- Breast milk

NOTE I: Preseminal fluid (the lubricating liquid that leaves the penis before ejaculation) can technically be a Transmission Fluid, depending on the quantity and concentration of HIV.

NOTE II: There are liquids that can contain the virus but NEVER in sufficient quantities to transmit it. These are NON-TRANSMISSION FLUIDS: saliva, sweat, tears, urine and faeces.

2. There needs to be a way to introduce one of these TRANSMISSION FLUIDS containing HIV. These ways can be through the skin (open wounds) or through one of the mucous membranes: mouth, end of the penis, interior walls of the vagina and the anus. The mucous membranes are a part of the body that do not have a protective barrier like the skin and they can easily suffer micro-fissures. That is, microscopic wounds that can't be seen, felt or bleed (For this reason, they are not an exit point, but an entry point for HIV).

Once Transmission Methods are known, the most common practices that can put someone at risk are the following:

- Sharing injection materials (shaving equipment, toothbrushes, syringes or needles for tattooing, piercing, etc).
- Transmission from a HIV-positive mother to her child during pregnancy, birth or breastfeeding.
- Sexual Intercourse, but there are different levels of risk depending on the specific type of sexual practice involved. They are grouped in two large groups:



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### HIGH RISK SEXUAL PRACTICES:

- Sexual relations with vaginal penetration (penis-vagina) or anal penetration (penis-anus) without a condom.

### LOW RISK SEXUAL PRACTICES:

- Oral Sex: Fellatio (mouth-penis, AKA blowjob) without a condom or cunnilingus (mouth-vagina) without a latex barrier.
- Anilingus (mouth-anus, AKA rimming) can be considered risky when blood is visibly seen coming from wounds in the anus.
- The sexual practice of rubbing two vaginas together (vagina-vagina, AKA scissoring) without protection.

In the case of penetration and vagina-vagina rubbing, there is a risk for those involved. However, for Oral Sex, the only risk is for the active person, that is, the one using their mouth.

## REINFECTION

HIV can be transmitted to people who do not have the virus, but it can also be transmitted to people who already have it (This is called reinfection). For this reason, HIV-positive people should continue taking the same precautions, given that reinfection supposes the introduction of more HIV virus and the possibility of drug-resistant HIV strains entering the body.

## PREVENTION

Preventative measures:

1. Disinfect shared injection materials (shaving equipment, toothbrushes, syringes\* or needles for tattooing, piercing, etc) or any stains from TRANSMISSION FLUIDS outside the body. This can be done by using bleach, 96° alcohol or a temperature higher than 60°C (with boiling water, for example).

\*In the case of sharing a syringe, it is necessary to clean it 3 TIMES with bleach with the needle attached (filling it completely and then emptying it completely each time) and then 3 TIMES with water.

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2. In sexual relations, there are four ways to prevent HIV transmission:

- a. Use male preservatives (condom) from the beginning of any of the following sexual practices: vaginal penetration (penis-vagina), anal penetration (penis-anus) and fellatio (mouth-penis).
- b. Use female preservatives (femidom) from the beginning of vaginal penetration (penis-vagina); in this case, either a femidom or a condom can be used, but not both, as the friction could break them.
- c. Use a latex band for Cunnilingus (mouth-vagina) and Anilingus (mouth-anus). As they are difficult to find, plastic food wrap can be used or "create your own" by cutting a condom at the top, bottom and down one side to create a latex rectangle.
- d. Use plastic food wrap for scissoring (vagina-vagina).