

But I have already had unprotected sex with my partner before?

Many people don't know that DISCORDANCE is possible. Discordance means that one partner in a relationship is HIV positive, while the other partner is still HIV negative. This is possible even if the couple have had unprotected sex before. The box below explains why

Imagine you have unprotected sex with someone who got infected with HIV 6 months ago. This person will not have the highest concentration of HIV in their blood and you may actually not get HIV immediately. BUT: If you continue to have unprotected sex with this partner, you might eventually get infected. Therefore

- you need to protect yourself, even if you had unprotected sex before
- you should find out your status as a couple

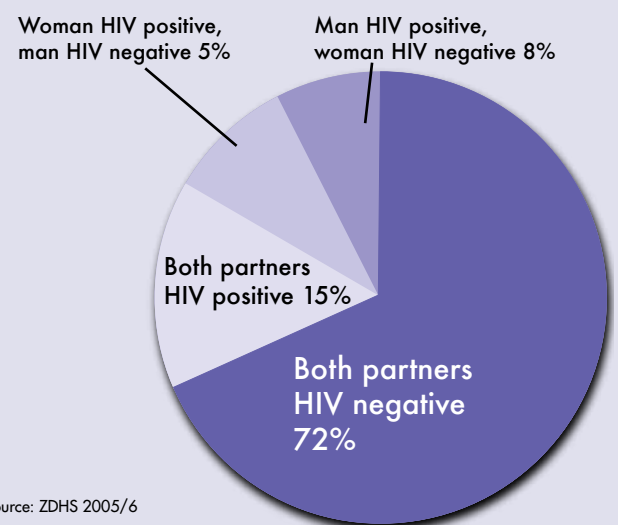
What can I do?

- Talk about HIV risk with your partner.
- If you are currently not in a relationship, know your HIV status and before starting a new relationship know your partner's HIV status. It's wise to go for an HIV test together!
- Discuss how you and your partner will prevent HIV. These are your options:
 - Abstain from sex until you have been tested for HIV.
 - Be faithful to each other. (If one or both of you are HIV positive you also need to use condoms every time you have sex).
 - Use male or female condoms. Remember, condoms are effective when used correctly and used all the time.

Q: But I already have more than one wife?
 A: This is common but it is never too late to take action. You can talk to your wives or husband and together go for HIV testing. Consider your risks and make a commitment to prevent HIV.



In Zimbabwe, 1 out of 7 couples are discordant.



Do you need more information?

If you would like to know more, visit your nearest health facility or call the National Aids Council Office nearest to you.

NAC Head Office	04-791170
Harare:	04-708070
Bulawayo:	09-884077
Manicaland:	020-64324
Midlands:	054-220084
Mashonaland West:	067-22741
Mashonaland East:	079-22008
Mashonaland Central:	011878935
Matebeleland North:	09-882943
Matebeleland South:	084-22631
Masvingo:	039-262097

Source: ZDHS 2005/6

ONE partner is the right choice



Funded by Expanded Support Programme

Find out more in this pamphlet.

Q: Many people today are HIV positive – why?

A: One of the reasons is because people have more than one partner at the same time. Research has revealed that this is a major cause of new HIV infections in Zimbabwe.

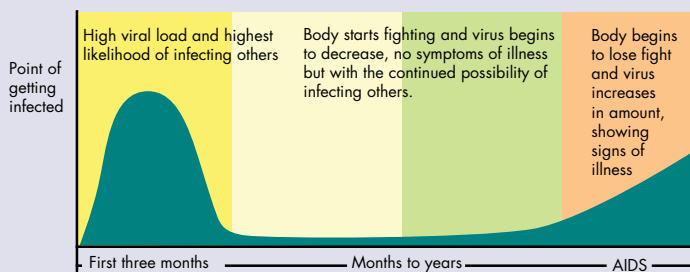
Basic facts and new facts about HIV

- HIV is found in body fluids and is mainly spread by having unprotected sex.
- When you get infected with HIV, it takes your body up to 3 months to make antibodies to fight HIV.
- When you go for an HIV test, your blood is checked for those antibodies to HIV. In the first 3 months after you have got HIV (the 'window period') his test cannot tell if you are HIV positive.

Scientists have also found that:

- HIV can be transmitted in every sexual act, but it is most likely to be transmitted by someone with a high concentration of HIV in their blood.
- When you get HIV, it begins to multiply rapidly before your body has made antibodies to fight it.
- Once your body has made antibodies to fight HIV, the amount of HIV in your blood will decrease, usually for 5 to 10 years, after which the body begins to weaken, you'll be very sick and have a lot of HIV in your blood again.

The diagram below shows how the amount of HIV in your blood changes from the time you first get infected until the time you are sick with AIDS.



Source: UNFPA Zimbabwe based on Galvin, S.R. & Cohen, M.S. (2004)

You need to know that

- During the first 3 months of being infected, you have the highest concentration of HIV in your blood (but you will not notice it).
- During the first 3 months you are much more likely to pass the virus on to other people,
- If you have unprotected sex with someone who has recently been infected themselves, they are very likely to pass on HIV to you.

Relationships that are more risky

- Having several girl friends or boy friends at the same time
- Being married and having another extra marital relationship (eg. a "so called small house")
- Polygamous marriages – this is where a man has more than one wife.
- Other people do not have more than one partner at the same time but change their sex partners often, say every three months for example.

All these relationships strongly increase the chances of getting infected and passing on HIV.

Remember: If you have only one partner, but your partner is in one of these relationships, your risk is also very high.

Why is it very risky to have more than one sexual partner at the same time?

It is risky because you become part of a sexual network: Although you only have two partners, you are also exposed to the infections of your partner's partners if they are also unfaithful.

You can see in the table below that although only Henry and Albert have 2 partners, and Jack has 3, all the people have become part of a sexual network and are exposed to HIV.

This means that:

- Although you may not be in physical sexual contact with your partner's other partner; you are exposed to their infections.
- if one of the people in the sexual network gets HIV, it is likely to quickly spread to all the others.
- since you have sex with more than one person within 3 months' time, it is very likely that all your sexual partners will get HIV from you.

Sexual network

