



## Now Can You Answer These Questions?

**What is HIV?**

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**What is AIDS?**

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**How is HIV spread?**

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**Are you at risk of getting HIV?**

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**Can you prevent yourself from getting HIV?**

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**Have you thought about knowing your HIV status?**

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**Have you thought about having an HIV test together with your sexual partner?**

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# HIV and AIDS

*Some Questions and Answers*



Adapted from CDC

Funded by Expanded Support Programme

## What is HIV?

HIV, Human Immunodeficiency Virus, is the virus that causes AIDS. The virus attacks the defense system of the body and slowly makes an infected person sicker and sicker until they have AIDS.

## What is AIDS?

AIDS stands for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. AIDS is the name for a group of sicknesses caused by HIV. AIDS usually develops some years after a person is infected with HIV.

## Can AIDS be cured?

No. There is no cure for AIDS.

## How does a person get HIV?

HIV is found in body fluids such as blood and sexual fluids (semen in men and vaginal fluids in women). It is also found in breast milk. HIV is mainly spread by:

- Sex (80 to 90 %): You can get HIV from having unprotected sex with a person who is infected with HIV. This is the main way of HIV transmission in Zimbabwe!
- Mothers to babies (10 to 20 %): women with HIV can pass on the virus to their babies during birth and through breast feeding.
- Infected blood (1%): a person can get HIV from the infected blood of another person. This can happen when

receiving a blood transfusion, contact of open wounds with infected blood or even through injection needles used on an infected person before. In Zimbabwe blood used in hospitals is thoroughly screened for HIV and other infections before it is given to a patient. If the test is HIV positive it is not used for transfusions.

## HIV is NOT spread by:

- donating blood
- sharing cooking utensils
- using public toilets
- sharing a room with an infected person
- touching or caring for an infected person
- eating freezits
- mosquitoes
- coughing and sneezing
- witchcraft

## Can one partner be infected and the other not?

Yes, this is not uncommon. It is estimated that in 1 out of 7 couples in Zimbabwe, one partner is infected and the other not. Partners who talk about HIV and get tested together can, as a couple and, as the parents of their children, keep healthy and protected.

## Are some people at greater risk of getting HIV than others? Yes!

- Persons who have more than one sexual partner over the same period of time (for example a partner outside their marriage).
- Young people who start sex early with older sexually experienced partners who are likely to have been exposed to infection.
- Those who start a sexual relationship or get married without using condoms and without knowing their HIV status.

Having unprotected sex (sex without a male/female condom) with an HIV positive person.

Men and women who have sex with untreated sexually transmitted diseases.

Men and women who change their sexual partners frequently.

## Are you personally at risk of having or getting HIV?

Only YOU can answer this question! Think about behaviors which may place you at risk:

- Have you ever had unprotected sex?
- Have you had sex with many partners?
- Is it possible that you have ever had sex with a partner who is infected with HIV?
- Have you ever had a sexually transmitted disease? Do you have a sexually transmitted disease now?
- Has any of your past or current sex partners had sex with other persons?

If you answered YES to any one of the above questions, you have been exposed to risk.

## How can you protect yourself from getting HIV?

- Acknowledge that
  - AIDS is a serious problem in your community
  - Your or your partner's behaviour may expose you to HIV risk
  - Learn about the ways that HIV is spread and use this information to avoid infection.
- Reduce your personal risk:
  - Delay having sexual intercourse.
  - Before starting a sexual relationship, know your HIV status, go for an HIV test and insist on knowing the HIV status of your partner.
  - Remain faithful to one partner who is faithful to you.
  - Use condoms consistently.
  - Talk to your sexual partner about HIV.
- Take action!
  - Talk about HIV testing with your partner.
  - Get tested for HIV and find out the result.
  - Use the information to plan for your future and your family's future.
  - Be a role model, but do not point fingers at others.
  - Help others to understand about HIV and AIDS. Talk to your parents, your friends and your children
  - Accept, love and care for People Living With HIV.