

Wrong ideas

People believe many wrong things about sexual relationships.

- Young women think that older (possibly married) men are “safe”. They don’t remember that their older male partner may have had several partners and high exposure to HIV – even if he is currently married to one woman.
- Adult men think young women are “safe”. They don’t consider that young women, although they’ve only been having sex for a little while, may have had high exposure to HIV through another older male partner.
- People believe that having more than one partner is not so risky, unless the partner is a sex worker or having sex with a sex worker. In fact, having more than one partner at the same time is very risky, in particular in relationships, in which condoms are not used.

Make the best choice for your life

Now that you know what puts you at risk, you can do something about it.

YOU CAN:

- decide not to have sex until you are older and feel ready to make informed decisions.
- avoid sex with several partners.
- if you are currently not in a relationship, know your HIV status before starting a new relationship (getting tested for HIV as a couple before and during marriage is the wise choice).
- discuss how you and your partner will prevent HIV.
- make a commitment to be faithful to each other;
- use male or female condoms; remember: condoms are effective when used correctly and used all the time.

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	04-791 171
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



HIV & I
 What’s new?



Funded by Expanded Support Programme

Find out in this pamphlet about your risk and how you can avoid HIV infection.



What you already know

You know a lot about HIV and AIDS. You know that you can get HIV from having unprotected sex. You know AIDS is a disease that affects most Zimbabwean families. And that HIV slowly weakens the immune system – the part of the body that fights disease. You know HIV is a virus that lives in our bodies for many years and eventually causes AIDS. You know that there is no cure for AIDS.

But here are some things about HIV and AIDS that you might not know

Scientists have also found that:

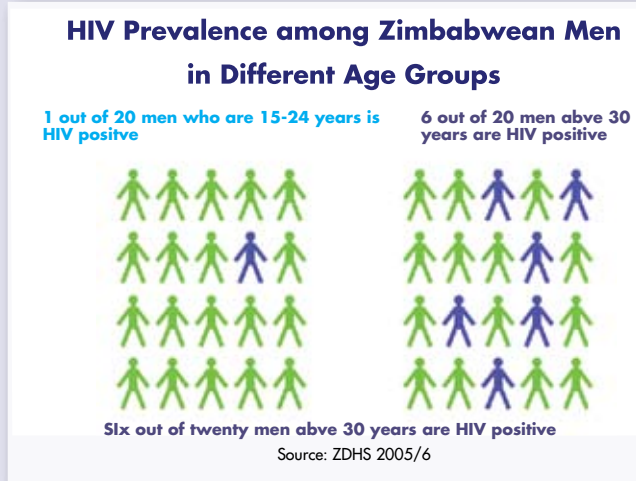
- HIV can be transmitted in every sexual act, but it is most likely to be transmitted by someone with a high concentration of HIV in their blood.
- when you get HIV, it begins to multiply rapidly before your body has made antibodies (body soldiers) to fight it.
- once your body has made antibodies (body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

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). This is called the window period.
- 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.

Important information for young women!

Here is a chart showing what percentage of men in Zimbabwe are HIV positive in different age groups:



- You can see that some young men are infected with HIV, but HIV is much higher in men above 25 years of age.

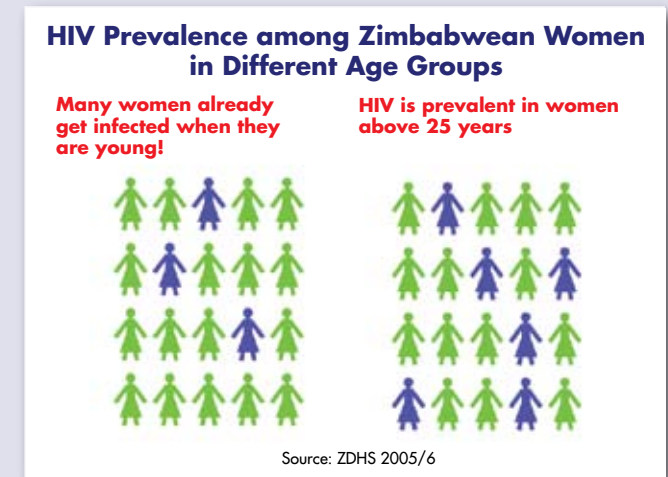
Think about what this chart means for you:

- A partner who is much older than you has probably had other sexual partners before you and has been exposed to the risk of getting HIV.
- Unprotected sex with a man above 30 years is 6 times more risky than with a man below 24.
- Unprotected sex with anyone is very dangerous unless you know one another's status and stay faithful to each other or use condoms.

The chances of getting HIV are higher if you have unprotected sex with a man over the age of 30 years that with a man below 24 years of age.

Important information for young men!

Here is a chart showing what percentage of women in Zimbabwe are HIV positive in different age groups:



- You can see that many women already get infected with HIV before they are 24. Among women above 25 years of age, HIV is even higher.

Think about what this chart means for you:

- Many young women are newly infected with HIV before they are 24 years old. Newly infected persons are particularly likely to pass on HIV.
- Unprotected sex with anyone is very dangerous unless you know one another's HIV status and stay faithful to each other or use condoms.

Remember:

Getting tested for HIV as a couple before starting a sexual relationship and getting married is a wise choice.