

Common Myths About HIV and AIDS

Myth: I'm HIV Positive, my life is over!

Truth: In the early years when the disease was epidemic, the death rate from AIDS was extremely high. But today's drugs allow HIV-positive people -- and even those with AIDS -- to live much longer, normal, and productive lives.

Myth: If I'm getting treatment, I can't spread the virus

Truth: When HIV treatments work well, they can lower the amount of virus in your blood to a level that doesn't show up in blood tests. This is called an undetectable viral load. However, this doesn't mean zero viral load, and there can be intermittent increases in the virus level. So while you are less contagious with an undetectable viral load, the risk of spreading HIV is not zero.

Myth: I can get HIV by being around people who are HIV-positive.

Truth: HIV isn't spread through touch, tears, sweat, saliva, or pee. You can't catch it by:

- Breathing the same air
- Touching a toilet seat or doorknob or handle
- Drinking from a water fountain
- Hugging, kissing, or shaking hands
- Sharing eating utensils
- Using exercise equipment at a gym

You can get it from infected blood, semen, vaginal fluid, or breast milk.

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Myth: Mosquitoes spread HIV.

Truth: Because the virus is passed through blood, people have worried that they could get it from biting or bloodsucking insects. Several studies show that doesn't happen -- even in areas with lots of mosquitoes and cases of HIV.

When bugs bite, they don't inject the blood of the person or animal they bit before you. Also, HIV lives for only a short time inside them.

Myth: You can't get HIV from oral sex

Truth: It's true that oral sex is less risky than some other types of sex. The rate of transmission is 0 to 4 cases in 10,000 acts. But you can get HIV by having oral sex with either a man or a woman who is HIV-positive. Always use a latex barrier during oral sex.

Myth: I'm straight and don't use IV drugs. I won't get HIV.

Truth: You can get the virus from heterosexual contact, too: About 1 in 6 men and 3 in 4 women do.

Myth: I could tell if my partner was HIV-positive!

Truth: You can be HIV-positive and not have any symptoms for years. The only way for you or your partner to know if you're positive is to get tested

Myth: I don't need to worry about getting HIV. Drugs will keep me well.

Truth: Antiretroviral drugs, also called ART, do improve the lives of many people who are HIV-positive and help them live longer. Many of these drugs are expensive and have serious side effects. Nothing yet cures HIV. And drug-resistant strains of HIV can make treatment harder. Prevention is cheaper and easier than managing a life-long condition and the problems it brings.

References:

<https://www.webmd.com/hiv-aids/top-10-myths-misconceptions-about-hiv-aids#1>

