



M A N A G E R ' S K I T

EMPLOYEE EDUCATION

**USER'S
GUIDE**

**WORKPLACE
POLICY**

**EMPLOYEE
EDUCATION**

**FAMILY
EDUCATION**

**COMMUNITY
SERVICE**

RESOURCES

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HELP

E M P L O Y E E E D U C A T I O N

- **Educating Your Workforce: A Guide for Managers**
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 - **How to Evaluate the Effectiveness of Your HIV/AIDS Program**
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Educating Your Workforce

A Guide for Managers

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INTRODUCTION

Across the United States, more and more businesses are having to face the AIDS epidemic. Large and small organizations need reasonable and low-cost, time-efficient ways to manage the impact of HIV/AIDS. Consider these facts:

- It is estimated that 650,000 to 900,000 people in the United States are currently infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.
- The majority of HIV infections is among those people between the age of 25 – 44. Over 50 percent of the U.S. workforce is in that age group. The rising infection rate among adolescents tells us that the rate of infection in the labor force of the coming decade will also be high.
- AIDS has generated more individual lawsuits across a broad range of health issues than any single disease in American legal history. Under the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act, an employer may be held liable for discriminating against an applicant or an employee by basing employment decisions on the individual's HIV/AIDS status.

This brochure is designed to help employers respond to HIV/AIDS using strategies and resources that have proven to be successful and cost-effective and require a minimum of time to implement. It provides straightforward, step-by-step information to help you set up your own HIV/AIDS education program.

Other areas of concern not covered in this brochure, such as legal requirements or employee benefits, are equally important, and you are encouraged to seek professional guidance in those areas.

This brochure is designed for general workplaces, not specialized settings such as health care, public safety, or emergency work sites.

What Is an HIV/AIDS Education Program?

An HIV/AIDS education program is a planned, ongoing strategy that helps you and your employees manage the impact of HIV/AIDS in ways that are responsible, productive, and cost-effective. A comprehensive program includes four basic steps:

- Develop an HIV/AIDS policy.
- Define your education goals and objectives.
- Train your supervisors and managers about HIV/AIDS, making your workplace policies on HIV/AIDS clear. They need to know how to manage your policies to ensure that they do not discriminate toward coworkers who are HIV-infected or caring for someone with HIV/AIDS.
- Educate yourself and your employees, their families, and the community about HIV/AIDS, providing accurate, up-to-date information throughout your organization on a continuing basis.

What Are the Benefits of an HIV/AIDS Program?

Learning how HIV/AIDS can affect your business will help you take responsible steps to minimize its impact — the workplace disruption, lost productivity, lawsuits, and other issues faced by employers that were not prepared for the first case of AIDS among their employees.

Many employees and their families will appreciate the concern their company has shown in addressing their questions about HIV/AIDS.

When business leadership takes a stand on HIV/AIDS — talking about it openly, accurately, and honestly — employees, their families, and the community are more likely to respect the importance of the issue. Therefore, your effort to educate your employees, their families, and the community can help prevent the spread of HIV infection and AIDS.

What About a Crisis Situation?

You can help prevent a crisis situation by having your strategy in place and providing education before a case of HIV/AIDS is diagnosed among your employees. If you act now to find out more about HIV/AIDS and how it can affect your workplace, you can be prepared to respond before it costs you time, money, and negative public relations.

However, if you are confronted with a situation in which you need to make an immediate decision concerning HIV/AIDS in your workplace, try to avoid making a decision based on emotions. Remember that you may be setting a precedent and your decision has an effect on the entire work group, not just on one person. Stay calm, assess the resources available to you, and determine the best course of action.

Refer to the Resources section of this brochure for expert assistance, advice, and suggestions about individuals who can help intervene in the crisis. Once you have identified the advice and support you need, you can proceed with planning and implementing an ongoing HIV/AIDS education program in your workplace.

Two Primary Concerns — Time and Money

An effective HIV/AIDS program for your workplace does not have to take a great deal of valuable time away from other pressing business concerns. It does take a little management time:

- an hour or two a week of management planning for a few months to set the program in motion
- one or two hours of planning or monitoring every three to six months thereafter
- one or two hours every three to six months of HIV/AIDS activities, such as educational presentations, volunteerism, and community service.

There are organizations that offer technical assistance and workplace presentations. (See Resources, page 15.)

An effective HIV/AIDS program does not have to be costly. Policies, guidelines, educational materials and speakers that can accurately assist and reinforce you in your response to HIV/AIDS are available at little or no cost. A survey of several small businesses, for example, revealed the following:

- A 22-employee food manufacturing firm spent only \$25 on brochures, using other free resources to put together a program.
- A consulting firm with 150 employees spent \$300 for legal consultation and services and \$1,200 for the services of a professional workplace health-promotion specialist.
- In a law firm with 45 employees, the annual AIDS update program costs about \$500 for an expert speaker.

By planning ahead, setting time aside and using inexpensive or free resource materials, you can ensure that your organization has an effective program to manage the impact of HIV/AIDS successfully.

How to Use This Brochure

This brochure is divided into two sections:

- The planning section provides details to help you develop a strong foundation for your HIV/AIDS education program.
- The implementation section takes you through the steps that will help you translate your planning into action — to put in place an HIV/AIDS program that will work for your organization now and into the future.

The basic steps required to plan an effective HIV/AIDS education program may vary from organization to organization. The size of your company, the type of industry, your location, and your organizational style will help determine the steps you must take.

Use this brochure as a guide. If one of the steps doesn't seem to be quite right for you, adapt it to meet your needs. Putting an HIV/AIDS education program together is something like putting together a puzzle. All the pieces are available, but it is not immediately clear where they are or how they fit together. Yet any piece that fits makes the whole program easier to complete.

Planning

Approach the management of HIV/AIDS as you would any other management concern in the workplace. Do what you already know works in your business, acting within your organizational style.

Don't risk your planning phase. It is better to take a little more time to plan than to rush into a program that isn't quite ready. Take time to lay the groundwork for an HIV/AIDS program that works for your business and assess the level of support of management.

GETTING STARTED

To begin the planning phase, look ahead in your schedule and block out 2 hours each week for 2 months — approximately 16 hours. As you get into the planning phase, you will begin to see how much time you will need for the implementation phase. Look ahead and block out that time as well. If planning takes more (or less) time than you figured, adjust the time frame to fit.

Identify a Leader or Supporter Inside the Organization

Consider the following:

- A leader or supporter is the driving force behind a successful program — the person who is willing to initiate and develop the program and able to make it work. He or she must be respected by others.
- Someone in the organization who is already knowledgeable about HIV/AIDS may be the best leader or champion for your HIV/AIDS program. This person may be you.
- There may be more than one leader or supporter and, if so, the leaders should be encouraged to work as a team.

Encourage Teamwork

If you don't see anyone else in the organization who fills the bill, gather together a small group of people who are able to work well with you and create your leaders and supporters that way.

Many successful small business HIV/AIDS programs were the result of teamwork. A successful team involves people who represent various aspects of the workplace, are committed to the issue, and are able to frame the team's decisions for others.

Even in very small businesses, there may be people who could be extremely helpful in developing an HIV/AIDS program.

If you go for a team approach, keep the team small enough to be easily managed, yet large enough to be representative.

By distributing information tasks among several people, the team approach can be very efficient.

Get Support From the Top

For an HIV/AIDS program to succeed, it is preferable to have visible top management support. Surveys show that small business owners and senior managers are mostly concerned with the duration and costs of an HIV/AIDS program, so these are the issues that must be addressed when selling the idea to management.

- Identify the internal approval steps that may be necessary to advance your HIV/AIDS program.
- Do your homework to build your case for support from the top. Educational surveys are available that can help determine the knowledge and needs of your employees.

- Contact your trade or professional associations or union and find out what they know about HIV/AIDS programs in your industry.
- Ask about costs, time, successes, problems, and other relevant concerns.
- Find out if other businesses in your community have developed HIV/AIDS programs, and ask them the same questions.
- Contact the resources listed at the end of this brochure for further information.

Compile the information on HIV/AIDS programs you have found and present it to top management as you would any other business issue. It is best to base your justification for an HIV/AIDS program on sound business reasons, such as cost of training versus cost of litigation, workplace disruptions arising from fear, time lost for medical intervention, time lost for caregiving, and reduced productivity as a result of morale problems.

In most cases this kind of groundwork and preparation is enough to obtain support to continue the development of an HIV/AIDS program.

If you do not get support at this point, it may be because of misconceptions such as “AIDS doesn’t happen here” or “Everyone already knows all he/she needs to know about HIV/AIDS.” Be prepared with a well-documented presentation that includes statistics about the impact of the epidemic on American business.

BUILD THE FOUNDATION

At this point, there are several basic steps to follow that will help you complete your planning. Each step involves gathering information and identifying what is appropriate for your business. You may consider conducting a survey or a needs assessment among your employees to determine the content of your program. If you are using a team approach, assign specific tasks to team members to maximize efficiency.

Inform Yourself About HIV/AIDS

Before you can educate others about HIV/AIDS, you will need to educate yourself. You don’t need to be an AIDS expert, but you do need to understand the basics about HIV/AIDS.

If you are using a team approach, each team member should attend an HIV/AIDS seminar or program. You can find one by calling the AIDS office at your local department of public health; your local AIDS service organization; your local chapter of the American Red Cross; or your local hospital, college, or university.

Express your concerns and ask questions until you understand the basic facts and have confidence about your knowledge of HIV/AIDS.

As questions occur to you or your team members, jot them down and call the CDC Business and Labor Resource Service (1-800-458-5231) for answers.

Define Your Company's Position on HIV/AIDS

Businesses that have already confronted the issues of HIV/AIDS suggest that it is helpful to have a policy identifying the company's position and procedures that tell your employees how to address HIV/AIDS in your workplace. Your policy and procedures should take into consideration the medical facts, the legal issues, and the way your company communicates.

Developing a workplace policy on HIV/AIDS enables a company to be proactive in addressing one of the many pressing issues facing businesses today.

Steps for developing policy and procedures for your business are discussed in other materials available in this kit and through the CDC Business and Labor Resource Service.

Gather Information About Resources

Start by gathering as much information as possible so you can pick and choose the materials and resources that most closely meet your needs. If you are using a team approach, divide the following tasks among team members to maximize efficiency.

- Call the CDC Business and Labor Resource Service (1-800-458-5231). The Resource Service has available an enormous amount of information on HIV/AIDS — be as specific as possible about your needs so staff members will be able to send you the most appropriate materials.
- Contact your local chapter of the American Red Cross. Most chapters can provide you with a wide variety of HIV/AIDS education materials, including brochures and videotapes, that are specifically designed for the workplace. Many American Red Cross chapters have extensively trained HIV/AIDS staff who can come into your workplace to conduct a low-cost HIV/AIDS education program.
- Contact the AIDS office of your state or county health department. Nearly all departments of public health have a wide variety of free materials available, and many have trained medical professionals who can speak to your group.
- Contact your local AIDS service organization for materials, assistance, and advice. Many can provide basic HIV/AIDS education programs for your organization. AIDS service organizations often offer materials and programs designed for a variety of cultures, in a variety of languages and reading levels. Such agencies can also provide valuable support to employees with HIV/AIDS and their families, friends, and coworkers.
- Contact your trade or professional association or union and find out what it has done on HIV/AIDS in the workplace for your industry. Some associations and unions have developed industry-specific HIV/AIDS information, materials, and videotapes for their members. If your trade association or union has not done so, you may want to request that it address the issue of HIV/AIDS in your industry to be able to serve you and other members better.

- Check with other businesses in your community to find out what they are doing about HIV/AIDS. Most businesses that have already developed effective HIV/AIDS programs are very generous about sharing their programs, including policies, procedures, information, materials, and resources.
- Contact your local Chamber of Commerce or other business associations to see what they can offer.
- Contact the Rotary Club. The Los Altos Rotary Club of California has an award-winning videotape on HIV/AIDS that may be very useful for your business. Refer to the Resources section of this brochure.

Plan Your Budget

Now look at how much your program will cost. What can you afford to spend? What do the materials and programs cost? As you would with any business plan, set out the projected costs for your HIV/AIDS program. Compare those costs to the projected costs of a poorly managed workplace incident. Look specifically at the following:

- the cost of an expert speaker or health-promotion specialist
- the cost of materials

Most brochures, pamphlets, flyers, or reprints are free or available at very low cost.

Videotapes range greatly in price — select the best one for your needs within your budgetary constraints. You may want to consider purchasing more than one to start a videotape loan library for employees and their families.

“Packaged” HIV/AIDS programs that include a speaker (as well as a videotape or slide presentation) vary in cost:

- the cost of your time
- the cost of your team’s time
- meeting-room rental costs (VCR, slide projector, etc.)
- employee time away from work

For some businesses, there are cost factors other than the ones listed above that must be considered; for others, some of these costs may not be a concern. Project what your costs will be to provide the HIV/AIDS program that you want, and build your budget accordingly. To trim expenses, look for free materials or free or inexpensive speakers, or hold your employee meetings during lunch breaks. Be creative, and you will find a way that is within your budget to provide a program.

Plan Your Education Activities

Next, begin to determine the format of your HIV/AIDS education activities.

Enclosing an HIV/AIDS brochure in employee paycheck envelopes is a great first step, but it may raise more questions than it answers if you don’t follow up with further education. The best programs answer the most pressing questions employees have, clarify your company’s position on HIV/AIDS, provide insights and guidance from respected and believable AIDS experts and sources, and build a safe and supportive environment for employees. Also, the best programs take place over

time, engaging employees in various HIV/AIDS-related issues. This will require periodic employee programs to address these issues.

Though your employee HIV/AIDS education program can and should be conducted in a variety of ways— ranging from formal presentations by outside experts to distributing brochures — small-group meetings for employees are the backbone of an effective HIV/AIDS program. Brochures and other materials can be used to reinforce and supplement your small-group meetings.

Train Managers and Supervisors First

It is very important that you train your managers and supervisors about HIV/AIDS before you begin to educate the rest of your employees. Your supervisors and managers must understand the facts about HIV and AIDS and your company's policy to be able to do the following:

- be prepared to answer employee questions
- know where to refer employees for assistance or additional information
- be able to reinforce the company's position on HIV/AIDS
- support and encourage their employees' participation in training sessions
- be prepared to supervise and manage their work groups.

Plan Your Small-Group Meetings

Identify the best ways to bring your employees together into small groups.

A good employee HIV/AIDS education program should last between one and a half and two hours, although some businesses can't release employees from work for that long and have compromised with one hour programs.

The program should be offered to all employees over a short time span, so that everyone is provided with the same information at approximately the same time.

Who Will Conduct Your Meetings?

Determine whether there is someone inside the company who has appropriate training (such as an American Red Cross nurse) to facilitate a discussion and answer questions about HIV/AIDS. The person or persons should be respected and believable.

There are advantages to having a person inside the company who is able to conduct your small-group meetings. An internal person is known and trusted, is sensitive to the culture and unique concerns of the company, and can be a source of answers for employees' immediate questions and concerns.

Some companies have decided that it is more efficient and cost-effective to identify an interested employee and provide him or her with adequate training to be an internal HIV/AIDS resource person. This person stays up-to-date on HIV/AIDS, is immediately available to address concerns or solve problems, and can plan and conduct all future HIV/AIDS activities.

If you cannot select a person within your organization, check the information you have gathered and see if there is someone in the community who can conduct your small-group meetings. An advantage to choosing a facilitator from outside your organization is that your employees may be more comfortable discussing sensitive HIV/AIDS-related issues with a complete stranger.

What You Need to Communicate

During the small-group meetings, your employees need basic information to settle their concerns about HIV/AIDS so that you can avoid potential disruption in your workplace. Be sure to leave time at the end for discussion and questions. Topics to cover include:

- the company's policy or position on HIV/AIDS and procedures for handling AIDS-related problems or concerns
- how HIV is and is not transmitted
- why a coworker with HIV or AIDS does not pose a health risk to others
- how to prevent the spread of HIV
- how to respond to a coworker with HIV/AIDS
- company benefits available to employees and family members with HIV/AIDS
- confidentiality and privacy requirements
- where to go inside the company for help
- where to go for additional confidential information

How Will You Communicate About HIV/AIDS?

Now you need to decide how you will begin talking about HIV/AIDS in your business. It helps to have a communication plan so HIV and AIDS will be discussed responsibly and accurately. No matter how large or small your business, you have a variety of choices for communicating with employees.

List the different ways you communicate in your business. Decide which method would work best in your business for starting a discussion on HIV/AIDS and which would be best to use over time to update employees periodically on HIV/AIDS.

Many employers start talking about HIV/AIDS by handing out their policy statements or procedures at the beginning of their employee HIV/AIDS education programs.

Some employers start talking about HIV/AIDS by circulating their policy statements or procedures on HIV/AIDS to all employees as they would any other important business information.

Familiarize employees with the CDC National AIDS Hotline at 1-800-342-AIDS (2437) (1-800-344-7432 servicio en Español; 1-800-243-7889 TDD for deaf access) for confidential information about HIV/AIDS transmission, prevention or risk-reduction, testing, symptoms, and other related issues.

Frame the Context of Your Meetings — Why You Are Talking About HIV/AIDS

Many employers believe that the direct approach is best — they suggest that you introduce the subject of HIV/AIDS as a responsible employer addressing an issue of concern to employees, their families, and the community.

Although HIV/AIDS cannot be transmitted by casual contact, some employers have found that it is most logical to introduce the subject of HIV/AIDS in the context of on-the-job health and safety, since health and safety are concerns of employees, and employers are responsible for providing safe working environments.

Other employers begin the discussion of HIV/AIDS because employees are already talking about it and because HIV/AIDS is an issue of community and family concern.

No matter how you decide to talk about HIV/AIDS, it is useful to establish a context of open, two-way communication. Receptive management will make for responsive employees. And ensuring that HIV/AIDS is talked about openly, responsibly, and accurately can help avoid troublesome rumors and gossip.

Identify the Next Steps

An HIV/AIDS education program is not a one-time event. In fact, it has been found that short, one-time HIV/AIDS education programs are not effective. Plan six months or a year into the future, and see how you can reinforce the program you have begun. This last part of the planning phase is essential for the success of your program.

You might consider using HIV/AIDS as the reason to begin addressing other health concerns and developing a long-range health-promotion program for your company. Employers have found that health care costs for employees and their dependents can be reduced, and productivity increased, through health-promotion programs.

Plan to provide HIV/AIDS information to employees on an ongoing, regular basis.

- Send out new brochures periodically.
- Copy and distribute factual news reports of importance.
- Encourage employees to volunteer for HIV/AIDS programs in the community through their churches, schools, civic clubs, or other organizations.
- Provide HIV/AIDS education to all new employees.

Decide when the next series of small-group meetings will take place. (Every six months is recommended, or at least once a year.)

As you complete the planning phase, check to see if you have overlooked anything that might be important to your company.

- Have you considered the particular needs of your employees?
- Have you planned your program to fit your company culture?
- Is the team in agreement about the plan?
- Do you have support from top management?
- Do you have all the approvals you need to proceed?

The challenge of planning your HIV/AIDS program is a great opportunity to demonstrate how well your business functions. A sense of shared pride in having tackled a touchy issue with sensitivity, intelligence, courage, and compassion will help create a receptive environment as you put your HIV/AIDS education program into place.

IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation of your HIV/AIDS education program should be relatively easy once the planning phase is complete. As in the planning phase, use approaches that your employees are familiar with and understand. Use the following basic steps as a guideline, and adapt them to fit your needs.

Prepare for Your Small-Group Meetings

In setting up your meetings, you should do everything you can to create an open atmosphere in a private setting. Use your team by delegating responsibility for the various tasks:

- Reserve a room that is large enough for the number of people invited to attend, and small enough so that a private, free exchange of discussion and questions can take place.
- Order your materials and supplies, leaving plenty of time for things to arrive.
- Select a program or speaker that fits in with your company culture. In choosing your speaker, be sure he or she knows enough about your workplace so that he or she can tailor the approach to fit the audience. Contact your speaker early and coordinate schedules.
- Make sure necessary equipment and supplies are available. Check with the speaker to see what he or she needs, such as a VCR, slide projector, copies of materials, etc.
- Notify employees about the small-group meetings through your usual management channels.

Some businesses have sent out memos to all employees from the president, or another top executive, inviting them to attend the meeting on an assigned date. The memo often starts out with a statement about the company's position on HIV/AIDS; this sets a businesslike tone for the entire program by having the first communication to the employees come from the top. You can quickly establish credibility for your program.

The Meetings

- Support through management that all employees should participate, thus removing the stigma that might potentially keep someone from attending.
- To lend credibility to the program, a company official (preferably the president or another senior official) should introduce the program.
- Present the company position statement and ask for questions, clarification, and discussion.
- Introduce the speaker to begin his or her presentation.

Conclude the Meetings

- Encourage employee discussion and questions.
- Allow time for discussion and disagreement.
- Know that some people will remain uncomfortable.
- Encourage patience — it isn't necessary to learn everything all at once.
- Tell people where they can go to find more information.

Talk About What's Next:

- Let employees know that the program will not end with this meeting.
- Make clear that the company will continue to talk about HIV/AIDS openly and accurately.
- Describe any future plans.
- Encourage employees to share information with their families.
- Encourage employee community service and volunteerism.
- Encourage employees to get their questions answered. Identify the in-house HIV/AIDS expert who will be their company contact person, as well as outside, anonymous resources such as the CDC National AIDS Hotline.
- Encourage employees to talk responsibly about HIV/AIDS.
- Thank your employees for participating in the program.

Follow Up

While planning and implementing your HIV/AIDS program, you have learned a lot about HIV/AIDS, how to stay up-to-date, and who your best information sources are. Keep the momentum going by scheduling two hours every few months to monitor and plan your ongoing program.

If you are using a team approach, plan a two-hour meeting every few months with the team members:

- Review what has been done (responses and comments from employees, successes, failures).
- Review newly developed materials, such as programs, videotapes, or brochures.
- Plan the next steps of the program.

Follow-up is very important to the success of an HIV/AIDS education program. The most successful HIV/AIDS programs offer varied approaches over time, reinforcing clear, accurate, consistent messages and periodically providing new information.

CONCLUSION

Now that you have initiated your HIV/AIDS education program, some employees will want information to take home to their families and friends. Most employees will tell you that the program was worthwhile and many will talk about HIV/AIDS more openly, accurately, and responsibly and will be more accepting and supportive of a person with HIV/AIDS.

Most people who have developed HIV/AIDS education programs have been surprised by how interesting and useful the process was for them. They also found that it was much easier than they thought it would be. And for many employers, an unexpected benefit has been that employees and their families really appreciate the concern their companies have shown by taking action on HIV/AIDS.

Clearly, the AIDS epidemic continues to be a significant health concern and employers cannot avoid the issue. No workforce is immune to the possibility of HIV infection within its ranks. Also, under the requirements of the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act, employers who ignore the issue of HIV/AIDS may put themselves in legal jeopardy.

Through your investment of time, energy, and dollars, however, you have prepared your business and your employees to manage the impact of HIV/AIDS at work effectively. By confronting HIV/AIDS up front, directly, and responsibly, you have joined thousands of other businesses across the country making an effort to end the AIDS epidemic.

Successful training and management of this extremely sensitive, difficult issue helps to set the stage for future programs and policies on other health concerns.

RESOURCES

CDC Business and Labor Resource Service

This resource of the CDC National Prevention Information Network provides information and materials for employers on national, state, and local resources related to HIV/AIDS in the workplace. Its reference specialists can assist employers in identifying appropriate materials, resources, and programs for employees. A variety of educational materials (posters, brochures, guidelines, and videotapes) for the workplace is available. The Resource Service can also refer employers to local community organizations that provide workplace programs. The Resource Service can be reached Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. E.S.T., by calling toll-free 1-800-458-5231. The fax number is 1-888-282-7681. Visit the Business and Labor Resource Service (BLRS) home page at www.brta-lrta.org

The American Red Cross

In many communities, local chapters of the American Red Cross provide workplace resources/programs on HIV/AIDS. Contact your local chapter to find out the resources, programs and services it offers. The toll-free number is 1-800-375-2040.

The Department of Public Health

Departments of public health are resources for HIV/AIDS information, materials, and services. Contact your local or State department of public health and find out what it can provide for you.

CDC National AIDS Hotline

The CDC National AIDS Hotline is a 24-hour toll-free service that provides confidential information, referrals, and educational materials free of charge to the public. Employees can call the Hotline for confidential information about HIV/AIDS transmission, prevention or risk-reduction, testing, symptoms, and other related issues.

1-800-342-AIDS (2437)

1-800-344-7432 (Servicio en Español)

1-800-243-7889 (TDD for deaf access)

The Rotary Club

The Rotary Club in Los Altos, California, has produced an HIV/AIDS educational videotape called "The Los Altos Story." This videotape is a powerful depiction of the personal impact of HIV on specific individual business leaders, their families and the Los Altos Rotary Club. Contact your local Rotary Club for information.

Other Resources

Local organizations such as churches, schools, civic clubs, or other community groups often have information or programs on HIV/AIDS. Check with the groups in your community.

AIDS Service Agencies

AIDS service agencies serve most cities and many smaller communities in the United States, providing HIV/AIDS education and prevention services and speakers bureaus.

These materials were developed in partnership with The National AIDS Fund.

The information in this publication is solely for general information and for educational purposes and is not intended to be legal advice. Businesses and individuals should consult an attorney for specific legal advice.



HIV/AIDS: Are You at Risk?

Preventing HIV Through Education

WHAT IS AIDS?

While it's almost certain that you've heard quite a bit about AIDS in the past few years, the term human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) might be new to you. HIV and AIDS are closely related, and if you understand HIV infection, you can better understand AIDS.

AIDS stands for acquired immunodeficiency syndrome, caused by infection with HIV. Normally, the immune system fights off infections and certain other diseases. When the system fails, a person with HIV infection can develop a variety of life-threatening illnesses.

AIDS Is Caused by HIV

AIDS is caused by the virus called the human immunodeficiency virus, or HIV. A virus is one of the smallest "germs" that can cause disease.

If you have sex or share needles or syringes with an infected person, you may become infected with HIV. Specific blood tests can show evidence of HIV infection. You can be infected with HIV and have no symptoms at all. You might feel perfectly healthy, but if you're infected, you can pass the virus on to anyone with whom you have sex or share needles or syringes.

Will You Get AIDS if You Are Infected With HIV?

In recent years, about half the people with HIV have developed AIDS within 12 years, but the time between infection with HIV and the onset of AIDS can vary greatly. The severity of the HIV-related illness or illnesses will differ from person to person according to many factors, including the overall health of the individual.

Today there are promising new medical treatments that can postpone many of the illnesses associated with AIDS. This is a step in the right direction, and scientists are becoming optimistic that HIV infection will someday be controllable. In the meantime, people who get medical care to monitor and treat their HIV infection can carry on with their lives, including their jobs, for longer than ever before.

How Can You Become Infected With HIV?

You can become infected with HIV in the following ways:

- Having sexual intercourse—anal, vaginal, or oral—with an infected person
- Sharing drug needles or syringes with an infected person
- From mother to baby—before or during childbirth or breastfeeding
- From a blood transfusion prior to 1985

YOU CAN GET HIV FROM SEXUAL INTERCOURSE

HIV can be spread through sexual intercourse — from male to male, male to female, female to male, and, rarely, female to female.

HIV is not the only infection that is passed through intimate sexual contact. Other sexually transmitted diseases, such as gonorrhea, syphilis, herpes, hepatitis B, and chlamydia, can also be contracted through anal, vaginal, and oral intercourse. If you have one of these infections and engage in sexual behaviors that can transmit the virus, you are at greater risk of getting HIV.

HIV may be in an infected person's blood, semen, or vaginal secretions. HIV can enter the body through cuts or sores in the skin or the moist lining of the vagina, penis, rectum, or even mouth. Some of these cuts or sores are so small you don't even know they're there. Anal intercourse with an infected person is one of the ways HIV has been most frequently transmitted. Other forms of sexual intercourse, including oral sex, can spread it as well. During oral sex, a person who takes semen, blood, or vaginal secretions into his or her mouth is at risk of becoming infected.

Many infected people have no symptoms and have not been tested. If you have sex with one of them, you unknowingly put yourself in danger. The only sure way to avoid infection through sex is to abstain from sexual intercourse or engage in sexual intercourse only with someone who is not infected and only has sex with you. Male latex condoms help prevent HIV infection and other sexually transmitted diseases. Latex condoms with or without spermicides help prevent sexual transmission of HIV.

The female condom or vaginal pouch serves as a physical barrier to viruses. If a male latex condom cannot be used, consider using a female condom for male/female sexual intercourse. The polyurethane condom, approved by the FDA in 1991, has been shown to have the same barrier qualities as the latex condom. Lab testing has shown that particles as small as sperm and HIV cannot pass through this polyurethane material. Polyurethane condoms are an appropriate choice for people who are allergic to latex.

Other Transmission Risks

Casual contact through closed-mouth or "social" kissing is not a risk for transmission of HIV. Because of the potential for contact with blood during "French" or open-mouth kissing, engaging in this activity with an infected person is not recommended.

YOU CAN GET HIV FROM SHARING NEEDLES

Sharing needles or syringes, even once, is a very likely way to become infected with HIV and other germs. HIV from an infected person can remain in a needle or syringe and then be injected directly into the bloodstream of the next person who uses it. Sharing needles to inject drugs is the most dangerous form of needle sharing.

Sharing needles for other purposes may also transmit HIV and other germs. These other purposes include injecting steroids and tattooing or ear piercing.

If you plan to have your ears pierced or get a tattoo, make sure you go to a qualified person who uses brand new or sterile equipment. Don't be shy about asking questions. Responsible technicians will explain the safety measures they follow.

HIV AND BABIES

A woman infected with HIV can pass the virus on to her baby during pregnancy, while giving birth, or when breastfeeding. If a woman is infected with HIV before or during pregnancy, she can take treatments that will decrease her child's chance of becoming infected with HIV.

Any woman who is considering having a baby and who thinks she might have done something that could have caused her to become infected with HIV—even if this occurred years ago—should seek counseling and testing for HIV infection to help her make an informed choice about becoming pregnant. All pregnant women should be routinely counseled and offered testing.

BLOOD TRANSFUSIONS AND HIV

In the past some people became infected with HIV from receiving blood transfusions. This risk has been virtually eliminated. Since 1983, potential blood donors at risk of HIV infection have been asked not to donate blood. Since 1985, all donated blood has been tested for evidence of HIV. All blood found to contain HIV is discarded. Currently in the United States, there is only a very small chance of infection with HIV through a blood transfusion.

You cannot get HIV from giving blood at a blood bank or other blood collection center. The needles used for blood donations are sterile. They are used once, then destroyed.

HOW YOU CANNOT GET HIV

HIV infection doesn't "just happen." You can't "catch" it like a cold or flu. Unlike cold or flu viruses, HIV is not spread by coughs or sneezes. Again, you get HIV by receiving infected blood, semen, or vaginal fluids from another person.

- You won't get HIV through everyday contact with infected people at school, at work, at home, or anywhere else.
- You won't get HIV from clothes, phones, or toilet seats. It can't be passed on by things like forks, cups, or other objects that someone who is infected with the virus has used.
- You cannot get HIV from eating food prepared by an infected person.
- You won't get HIV from a mosquito bite. HIV does not live in a mosquito, and it is not transmitted through a mosquito's bite like other germs, such as the ones that cause malaria. You won't get it from bedbugs, lice, flies, or other insects, either.
- You won't get HIV from sweat or tears.

WHO IS REALLY AT RISK FOR HIV INFECTION?

There is evidence that HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, has been in the United States since at least the 1970s. The following are known risk factors for HIV. You may be at increased risk of infection if any of the following have applied to you since 1978.

- Have you shared needles or syringes to inject drugs or steroids? Or had sex with someone who has?
- If you are a male, have you had sex with other males?
- Have you had sex with someone who you believe may have been infected with HIV?
- Have you had a sexually transmitted disease (STD)?
- Have you received blood transfusions or blood products between 1978 and 1985?
- Have you had sex with someone who would answer yes to any of the above questions?

If you answered yes to any of the above questions, you should discuss your need for testing with a trained counselor. If you are a woman in any of the above categories and you plan to become pregnant, counseling and testing are even more important.

If you have had sex with someone and you didn't know his or her risk behavior, or if you have had many sexual partners in the last 10 years, then you have increased the chances that you might be HIV-infected.

What About the HIV Test?

The easiest way to tell if you have been infected with HIV is by taking an HIV antibody test. This test should be done through a testing site, doctor's office, or clinic familiar with the test. It is important that you discuss what the test may mean with a qualified health professional, both before and after the test is done.

In most people who are infected with HIV, it takes up to three months to develop enough antibodies to be detectable on a test. In some people, it could take up to six months.

Do You Need More Information About HIV or HIV Counseling and Testing?

You can receive free publications from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. To receive brochures, or to ask any questions about HIV infection or AIDS, call the CDC National AIDS Hotline at 1-800-342-AIDS (2437) (Spanish: 1-800-344-7432; deaf access: 1-800-243-7889 TDD). The Hotline is staffed with information specialists who can offer a wide variety of written materials or answer your questions about HIV infection and AIDS in a prompt, confidential manner. There are also local groups that can help you find the information you need. Contact your State or local health department, AIDS service organization, or other community-based organization addressing HIV and AIDS. The CDC National AIDS Hotline can tell you how to contact all of these resources.

The information in this publication is solely for general information and for educational purposes and is not intended to be legal advice. Businesses and individuals should consult an attorney for specific legal advice.

650,000 to 950,000
people in the
United States are currently
infected.

An infected woman
who is pregnant has a one
in three chance of
giving it to her
child.

And it's
preventable.



B U S I N E S S
R E S P O N D S
T O A I D S



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Public Health Service

■ It's HIV and AIDS.

AIDS — acquired immunodeficiency syndrome — is a fatal disease that breaks down the body's immune system. It destroys the body's ability to fight infection and illness.

AIDS is caused by a virus called the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). By preventing HIV infection, you can prevent AIDS.

Many different kinds of people have HIV and AIDS — male and female, married and single, homosexual and heterosexual, rich and poor.

There is currently no known cure and no vaccine to prevent HIV infection.

■ How do you get HIV?

Most people with HIV got infected by having sex with an infected partner. Many others got HIV by sharing needles to take drugs. Some infants got HIV from infected mothers during pregnancy, during delivery, and, in rare cases, through breastfeeding.

Since testing of the blood supply in the United States began in 1985, the chance of getting HIV from a transfusion is extremely small. You cannot get HIV from donating blood.

You also cannot get HIV from shaking hands with someone who has it, from working with someone who has it, or from volunteering to help people with AIDS.

■ How can you prevent infection?

You can prevent HIV by not having sex or by having sex with a single, mutually faithful, uninfected partner. You can reduce the risk of HIV infection by using a latex condom correctly every time you have sex.

You can prevent HIV by not shooting drugs or sharing needles and syringes.

■ How can you help?

First, educate yourself. Then, help your family and friends learn about HIV prevention. Just by talking, you may help save a life.

Next, get involved in your community. Start or join a project at your worksite, at your child's school, at your church or synagogue, or at any community organization. And remember, you won't get HIV from being a volunteer.

Find out more about what you can do to help. Call the CDC National AIDS Hotline at 1-800-342-AIDS.