



## HIV/AIDS

HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus. This virus attacks the body's immune system, which is your defence against infections.



### How HIV/AIDS is spread

The virus is spread from an infected person to someone else when there is an exchange of body fluids such as blood, semen, or vaginal fluids. This can occur during sexual intercourse, or when needles are shared.

A pregnant woman can infect her baby at the time of birth, and afterward during breastfeeding. Pregnant women should ask for an HIV test.

HIV is not spread by everyday social contact. Touching, hugging and shaking hands with an infected person is safe.

Some people worry that they can get HIV by a blood transfusion. Donated blood is always checked for HIV so the chances of getting it from a blood transfusion are also very, very low.

### How to tell if you have HIV

A simple blood test can tell if you are infected with HIV. A positive test result means that you have been infected

with HIV, and that you can spread it to others. A negative result means that no antibodies to HIV were found in your blood at the time of testing. Most positive tests will show up at three months, but HIV antibodies can take as long as six months to develop, so you need to get tested again to be sure you don't have the virus.

AIDS is the last stage of HIV infection. Infected people may get infections such as an unusual type of pneumonia, or develop skin cancer or other types of cancers.

### How to lower the chances of being infected with HIV



You can avoid HIV by making sure that you protect yourself by always practicing "safer" sex. You should discuss HIV with your partner, and have sex *only* with a partner who agrees to protect both of you by using a latex condom. Avoid using any instruments that pierce the skin unless you are sure they have been sterilized. Do not share personal items such as razors and toothbrushes.

### If you think you may be infected...

If you have taken chances, and are worried that you might be infected with HIV, please see your CLSC nurse. The blood test for HIV will be done, and all your information will be kept private. You might want to


tell your partner(s) yourself, but if you are not comfortable, talk to your doctor or nurse--they can help.

### How HIV/AIDS is treated

There is no cure for HIV infection or for AIDS at this time. The virus remains in the body for life. Several drugs have been developed recently that may slow the progress of HIV but so far none of them is a cure.



If you have any questions or problems about STDs, contact your local CLSC

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CONCEPTION AND ADAPTATION OF THIS LEAFLET BY ÉLIZABETH POIRIER AND OLIVIER FERLAND, JUNE 2002

