

About AIDS

AIDS is not easy to get! Casual contact will not transmit AIDS. Doctors and nurses who are around AIDS patients every day have not gotten AIDS. Hundreds of families of AIDS patients have been studied, and findings indicate that although family members kiss and hug, share toothbrushes, eating utensils, food, toilets and beds, no one gets AIDS from this kind of contact. Blood supplies used in hospitals are now safe because all blood is now tested for exposure to the AIDS virus. (You may hear of people who contracted AIDS this way before the test was available.)

AIDS is transmitted in specific ways. Any kind of intimate sexual contact--including vaginal or anal intercourse and oral-genital sex--can transmit the AIDS virus. Sharing a needle during drug use without sterilizing the needle can transmit the AIDS virus. Medical procedures such as acupuncture, beauty procedures such as ear piercing or electrolysis, and dental procedures all require sterilization of instruments used.

How can you decrease the risk of getting AIDS? Using a condom reduces the risk during sexual activity. The condom provides a barrier against the AIDS virus--however, some research indicates that there may still be some risk. Reducing the number of sex partners reduces risk. Making sure that appropriate procedures are used to sterilize equipment in medical, beauty or dental procedures helps to reduce the risk of getting AIDS. These steps involve an assertive stand toward sexual activity and health care.

If you think you may have been exposed to the AIDS virus, you can have a blood test. This test shows whether you have been exposed to the virus. It does not indicate whether or not you will contract AIDS. In New York City, the test is free (although a doctor may charge a fee for examining you). Ask your doctor to call the AIDS Hotline at 212-447-8200 for information about the test.

If you or someone you care about has any concerns related to AIDS and would like more information, come in and speak with a professional counselor in 1303 James Hall, or visit the Health Clinic in 114 Roosevelt.

All services are free and confidential.

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