

# THE BASIC FACTS ABOUT HIV/AIDS

## *What causes AIDS?*

AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome) is the late stage of infection with the human immunodeficiency virus, HIV. In some adults, AIDS can take more than 10 years to develop. Thus, a person infected with HIV may look and feel healthy for many years, but he or she can still transmit the virus to someone else. This is why it is very important for individuals to get tested.

## *How is HIV spread?*

HIV does not survive long outside the body. HIV is spread only when blood, semen, vaginal secretions, or breast milk that contains HIV is introduced into another person's body. Examples include:

- **having unprotected sex** (vaginal, anal or oral) with someone infected with HIV
- **sharing needles** to inject illegal and other drugs including steroids, or for body piercing or tattooing, with someone infected with HIV
- **from an infected mother to child** during pregnancy or delivery, or in infancy through breast feeding.

## *How can sexual transmission of HIV be prevented?*

The most effective way to prevent the sexual transmission of the virus is to abstain from sexual intercourse, or for two uninfected partners to remain mutually faithful. The risk of spreading HIV through sexual intercourse can be significantly reduced by the proper and consistent use of condoms. Safer sex practices that involve no penetration are also an effective way to reduce the risk of transmission of HIV.

## *Who is affected by HIV/AIDS?*

**HIV/AIDS can affect everyone.** HIV/AIDS affects people of all geographic locations, ages, races, ethnicities, social classes, and sexual orientations.

## *Can HIV be spread through casual contact?*

HIV is **not** spread by:

- donating blood
- mosquito bites and other bug bites
- sharing cups and utensils
- sneezes or coughs
- hugging, touching, or dry kissing a person with HIV
- sharing telephones, computers or coffee pots
- going to any public place with HIV infected people (pools, movies, etc.)

This means there is no danger of becoming infected through ordinary social contact.

## *Is there a cure for HIV or AIDS?*

**There is still no cure or vaccine for HIV or AIDS.** However, there are new drug treatments that can help many people with HIV stay healthy longer and can delay the onset of AIDS. As a result of these drugs, the number of HIV cases that develop into AIDS and the number of AIDS-related deaths have dropped dramatically in the U.S. However, HIV infection rates remain unchanged.

## *How can HIV/AIDS be stopped?*

### **YOU can help stop the spread of HIV/AIDS!**

Although public health follow-up of HIV cases is a sensitive civil rights issue, those infected with HIV have a personal responsibility to prevent the spread of the disease. Notification of contacts and cooperation with communicable disease prevention workers is a vitally important prevention measure.

**Educate yourself and others.** Get involved in community efforts. World AIDS Day, December 1, is a special opportunity every year to focus attention on this urgent challenge that affects us all. It is marked around the world by thousands of different events designed to increase awareness and to express solidarity and compassion. This World AIDS Day—and everyday—join the worldwide effort to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS.

## ***HIV/AIDS RESOURCE LIST***

### ***Counseling and Testing***

- ◇ NJ State Department of Health Sponsored HIV Counseling & Testing Sites Information **(800) 222-1222**
- ◇ Bergen County HIV Counseling and Testing Site, Hackensack - Call for appointment **(201) 336-3350**
- ◇ Hudson County HIV Counseling and Testing Site, Jersey City **(800) 280-2607, (201) 915-2545**
- ◇ Passaic County HIV Counseling and Testing Site, Paterson **(973) 523-8316**
- ◇ St. Michael's Medical Center, Newark, **(973) 877-5525**

### ***Information***

- ◇ AIDS Information Line, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week **(800) CDC-INFO**
- ◇ New Jersey AIDS/STD Hotline **(800) 624-2377**
- ◇ Bergen County Department of Health Services **(201) 634-2600**

### ***Early Intervention Programs***

- ◇ St. Michael's Medical Center, Newark **(973) 877-5525**
- ◇ St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center, Paterson **(973) 754-4701**
- ◇ Jersey City Medical Center, Jersey City **(201) 915-2294**
- ◇ St. Mary's Hospital, Passaic **(973) 470-3557**
- ◇ Paterson Counseling Center, Paterson **(973) 523-8316**

### ***Regional Pediatric HIV Treatment Centers***

- ◇ University of Medicine and Dentistry of NJ, Newark **(973) 972-0400**
- ◇ Newark Beth Israel Medical Center, Newark **(973) 926-8004**
- ◇ St. Joseph's Hospital & Medical Center, Paterson **(973) 754-4701**
- ◇ Jersey City Medical Center, Jersey City **(201) 915-2295**

### ***Other HIV Resources***

- ◇ AIDS Drug Distribution Program **(877) 613-4533**
- ◇ New Jersey Buddies Support Groups **(201) 489-2900**
- ◇ Hyacinth Foundation Hotline **(800) 433-0254; (732) 246-0204**
- ◇ Coalition on AIDS in Passaic County (CAPCO) **(973) 742-6742**

### ***HIV/AIDS Information on the Internet***

- ◇ American Medical Association, [www.ama-assn.org/](http://www.ama-assn.org/)
- ◇ American Social Health Association, [www.ashastd.org](http://www.ashastd.org)
- ◇ CDC, National Center on HIV, STD, and TB Prevention, [www.cdc.gov/nchstp](http://www.cdc.gov/nchstp)
- ◇ Journal of AIDS/HIV - Clinical Care, [www.ccsublishing.com/j\\_aids.htm](http://www.ccsublishing.com/j_aids.htm)
- ◇ Planned Parenthood Federation of America, [www.plannedparenthood.org](http://www.plannedparenthood.org)



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