

Englisch

AIDS and HIV

Current Knowledge, Protection and Treatment



Guidebook | available in 10 languages



LEGAL NOTICE

AIDS and HIV – Current Knowledge, Protection and Treatment

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We thank MSD SHARP & DOHME GMBH for their kind support in making this brochure available.



Dear Reader,

In my many years of working with migrants, I have learnt that information in their native language helps people lead healthier and safer lives. This is the reason why we have developed this guide on 'AIDS and HIV – Current Knowledge, Protection and Treatment' in several languages.



According to UNAIDS, the joint UN programme on HIV/AIDS, 36.7 million people worldwide were living with HIV in 2016. Every year, around one million people worldwide die from the effects of this acquired immune deficiency.

This is why it is important that we become informed about HIV, AIDS, hepatitis, tuberculosis (TB) and sexually transmitted infections, as well as about contraception and pregnancy. All of us should know about how to protect our communities and ourselves, and about the available counselling services and treatment options.

This guide was developed together with migrants for migrants. It is intended to provide the most important background information about HIV/AIDS briefly and in a way that is easy to understand, and to increase your health knowledge.

In producing the 'AIDS and HIV' guide we were able to build on the great results of the joint work done as part of the AIDS and Mobility Europe project (2009–2013). Our collaboration with our AIDS and Mobility Europe partners and their support is well remembered.

We thank the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the European AIDS Treatment Group (EATG), AIDS-Fondet Copenhagen, YENIDEN Health and Education Society (Istanbul), the National Institute of Health, Migration and Poverty (NIHMP) in Rome, AIDS-i Tugikeskus (Tallinn), the NAZ project (London) and TAMPEP International Foundation.

Ramazan Salman

Managing Director
Ethno-Medical Centre Inc.



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HIV prevention is important for everyone. Even if you don't intend to have sex or use drugs: 'Knowledge is Power', and you may one day teach someone else. This guidebook provides information about HIV/AIDS, its prevention, testing, treatment, care and support. It also contains information about viral hepatitis, tuberculosis (TB) and sexually transmitted infections (STI).

All of these illnesses are caused by infections. An infection means that a very small organism, most of the time a virus or a bacterium, enters the body and causes changes that make the person ill.

Different infectious organisms affect different parts of the body. This can be a particular organ, for example the liver in the case of hepatitis, or a particular system, like the immune system in the case of HIV.

HIV, hepatitis and other STIs spread from person to person. Some human behaviours, such as sex and using drugs, make it easier for these viruses or bacteria to enter the body.

TO PROTECT YOUR HEALTH:

- If you have sex, practice safer sex
- If you use drugs, practice safer use
- Get vaccinated against hepatitis A and B

Get checked and tested if you think you may have been at risk.

Please contact the organisations listed at the end for more information and support.

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Your Rights

The right to health is a fundamental human right to which all people are entitled, regardless of their status or citizenship. As a result of the migration experience or because they lack access to information, prevention or health care services, some people have specific health needs.

Regulations and resolutions at the level of the European Union aim to ensure that people with migration experiences and members of mobile populations or ethnic minorities have equal access to health care. Even if you are in a country without legal residency status, you still have a right to health, and therefore access to medical care.

To find out more about accessing health services where you are, try contacting your nearest migrant support service. The organisations listed on the back cover of this guide also offer helpful information on this topic.

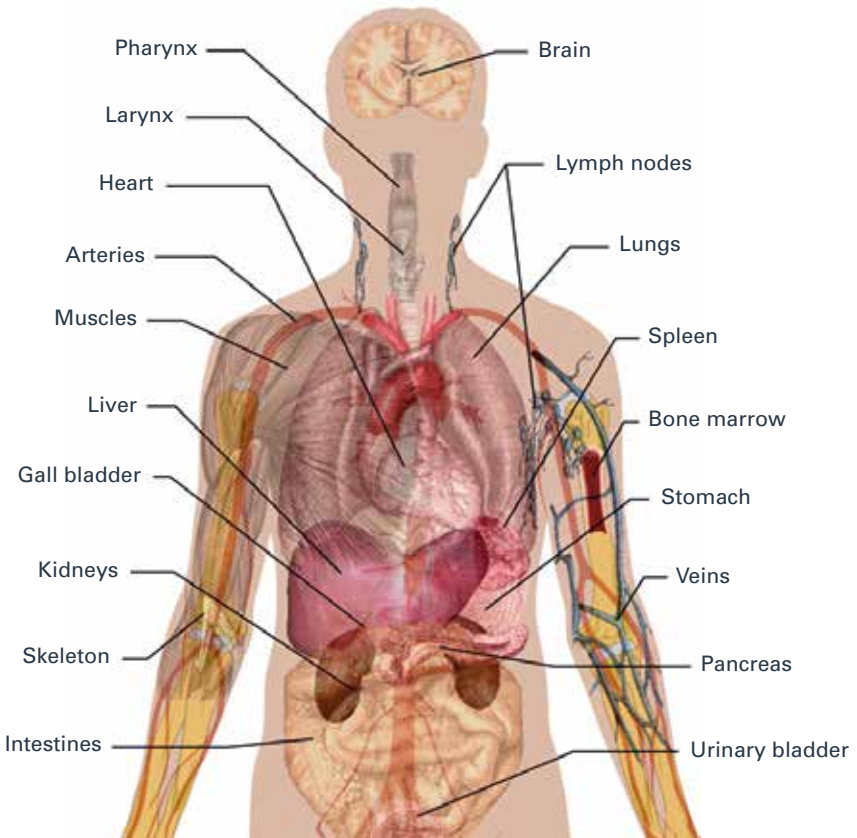


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The Human Body

The infections explained in this booklet affect different parts of the human body. This image shows some of the main building blocks and organs, and where they are located.

HUMAN ANATOMY



- HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is the virus that causes AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) if left untreated.
- There may be no symptoms in the early stages of HIV infection. A person can be infected with HIV for many years without symptoms, but still pass on the virus.
- Current treatments for HIV infection are very successful. In the best-case scenario, they can keep a person healthy for life. Successful treatment also prevents passing on the infection sexually.
- If left untreated, the virus affects the immune system, making the body unable to fight off and recover from many infections and other illnesses.
- AIDS can be avoided with treatment. Without treatment, HIV infection leads to the immune system becoming so weak that the body becomes susceptible to many serious illnesses and infections, which can be fatal.
- There is no vaccine yet to protect against HIV.

HIV AND BODY FLUIDS

The virus exists in all body fluids of an infected person, but concentrations high enough for transmission are only found in: blood, semen, vaginal fluid and maternal milk.

Sufficient virus has to enter the body for a person to become infected: via the bloodstream or mucous membranes (the moist, thin, sensitive type of skin inside the mouth, vagina, anus, foreskin and eye of the penis).

HIV CAN BE TRANSMITTED:

- By having anal or vaginal sex without a condom.
- By sharing needles, syringes and other drug use equipment.
- Through unsterile tattooing and body piercing.
- Through oral sex only when semen or menstrual fluid gets in the mouth and the lining of the mouth is injured.
- From an infected mother to her child during pregnancy, childbirth and/or breastfeeding. This can be safely prevented through medical care.
- Through unscreened blood transfusions, blood products and organ transplants.

If you think you have been at risk, get tested for HIV.



HOW HIV CANNOT BE TRANSMITTED

If you know someone who is living with HIV, it is safe to:

- Share glasses, plates, the same bed and toilet
- Have contact with sweat or tears
- Shake hands
- Touch and kiss
- Have non-penetrative sex
- Have protected oral, vaginal and anal sex using condoms and lubricant

If you think you have been at risk, get tested for HIV.

THE HIV TEST

- A blood test (antibody test) can show if someone has been infected with HIV ('HIV positive'). Some services also offer 'rapid' tests (using blood or saliva) that give a 'non-reactive' or 'reactive' result immediately. If the result is 'reactive', a confirmation test is required in order to diagnose an HIV infection with certainty. No confirmation test is required for a 'non-reactive' result as no HIV infection has been detected.
- Depending on the testing method, the test can only show the HIV status for a point in time several weeks earlier.
- Continue to protect yourself and others while you are waiting for the test result. The test does not prevent transmission.

A HIV ANTIBODY NEGATIVE TEST RESULT MEANS:

That NO antibodies to HIV were found in the blood and the person is free of HIV infection.

A HIV ANTIBODY POSITIVE TEST RESULT MEANS:

- The test found antibodies to HIV in the blood. This means that infection has taken place.

Symptoms

Some people report flu-like symptoms for a short time immediately after infection. This is called a sero-conversion illness. After that, symptoms can take years to appear, but the person can still infect others. Each individual responds differently to HIV infection, but symptoms can include persistent herpes and fungal infections, severe tiredness, night sweats, fever, extreme weight loss, persistent diarrhoea, red/purple/brown marks on the skin or the mouth. However, such symptoms can occur with a range of illnesses: only a test can confirm HIV infection.

Treatment

Antiretroviral medications are very effective in improving the health of people living with HIV and increasing their life expectancy to almost average. Most people living with HIV who have access to treatment will never develop AIDS. While there is currently no treatment that removes HIV from your body completely, you can stay healthy and avoid developing AIDS by taking antiretroviral medication. It prevents the virus from multiplying and causing more damage to the immune system. It has now been proven that early treatment lowers the risk of further illness. Patients decide together with their doctor when to begin treatment.

POST-EXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS (PEP)

Post-Exposure Prophylaxis is an emergency treatment that can help avoid HIV infection after an exposure to the virus that could result in transmission, such as having unprotected sex, a condom breaking or sharing injecting equipment. It consists of a one-month course of antiviral medication and has to be started within 72 hours of the exposure. Best results can be expected if treatment starts within 24 hours, even better within two hours.

Although the medications used have not been licensed specifically for this purpose, and effectiveness is based on experience, PEP is still recommended and prescribed in certain cases.

Before offering this treatment, the doctor will ask questions about the risk you experienced. Because the treatment can have side effects, it should only be taken if the risk was high. The way you can get PEP will be different in different places. Contact the HIV or health service nearest to you for more information.

In Germany, as in many countries of the European Union, doctors are bound by professional confidentiality. This is a patient right. It means you can talk openly about sexual contacts or problems with addiction.

Safer sex comprises sexual activities that avoid the transmission of disease by not exchanging body fluids or using protective barriers such as condoms. Deciding to always have safer sex is important for everyone. If you want to become pregnant, it is best if you and your partner get tested for sexually transmitted infections including HIV before stopping condom use.

Sometimes, e.g. when newly in love or under the influence of alcohol or drugs, it can be more difficult to stick to your own safer sex decisions. Make sure you think ahead of time about how you and your partners can best protect each other.

CONDOMS

Condoms protect from sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. The most common male condom is a thin latex (or polyurethane) tube that is put on the penis and prevents the semen from entering the vagina and uterus or anal canal. The semen is held inside the condom. This also prevents eggs being fertilised, and therefore pregnancy. The special condom for inserting into the vagina or anus can be useful for people who wish to have more control over safer sex, and in situations where the condom for the penis can't be used. Condoms for the penis come in a range of sizes, shapes, flavours and colours to suit every penis and occasion. Most important is that the condom has a quality seal (such as 'CE') and an expiry date.

Depending on the country and location, condoms can be bought at local shops, supermarkets and pharmacies, from vending machines and over the internet. Youth, social and health services often also distribute condoms, sometimes for free.

If used properly, condoms are proven to effectively protect all sexual partners from HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.

- Always use a condom for vaginal and anal sex.
- Especially for anal sex, always use a water-based lubricant for comfort, better sensation and to reduce the risk of the condom breaking. Never use two condoms together: friction makes them more likely to break.
- Some lubricants contain spermicides to prevent pregnancy. However, research has shown that using nonoxynol can increase your risk of HIV infection – so don't use any products containing nonoxynol.

If a condom breaks, leaks or slips off during intercourse and you think you may have been at risk of HIV infection, seek medical attention so that you may access PEP if needed (see the section on PEP on page 10).

You can also get an emergency contraceptive if you are worried about getting pregnant (see chapter 10).



CONDOM TIPS

- Always buy condoms with a quality seal ('CE').
- Only condoms made of latex or polyurethane are suitable for safer sex.
- Check that the package is not damaged.
- Check the expiry date. If the condom is out of date, it is more likely to break. Therefore, do not use a condom after the expiry date.
- Keep condoms in a place where they will not get damaged by heat.
- Use a new condom every time you have sex.
- Open the packet carefully with your fingers: watch out for sharp or broken fingernails.
- Only use water-based lubricant with condoms.

USING CONDOMS CORRECTLY

- The penis must be fully erect before you put the condom on.
- Put the condom on before starting intercourse.
- Pinch the teat or top of the condom between your thumb and forefinger, making sure you get all the air out.
- Put the condom on the head of the penis and roll it down the shaft of the penis while holding the tip.
- Make sure you roll the condom all the way down to the base of the penis.
- Check now and then that the condom is still on.
- Withdraw the penis before it becomes soft.
- Hold on to the rim of the condom when withdrawing the penis to prevent it slipping off and being left in the vagina or anus.
- After the penis is withdrawn, remove the condom and dispose of it in a waste bin (don't flush condoms down the toilet – they clog up pipes and water treatment plants).

It is safest not to use drugs. In addition, the possession of illegal drugs (including cannabis, heroin, cocaine, amphetamines) is prohibited and can lead to criminal prosecution by the police and the office of public prosecution. This in turn affects rights under immigration legislation (see box). However, if you do take drugs or have an addiction, there are ways to reduce the risks.

If you or people close to you are using drugs, being well informed about safer drug use is very important. We do not want to use this to encourage drug use, but to prevent damaging health and social effects.

Almost all countries in the European Union offer support to people who use drugs without being judgmental or insisting on abstinence. Addiction is an illness, not a moral transgression. People who use drugs are also reached out to in the streets to provide them with clean needles, syringes and other equipment. They also receive assistance with finding shelter and medical care, including the option to start treatment. In some countries there are also drug consumption rooms to make injecting drugs safer. The main goal of such services is to reduce the harm and health problems related to using drugs.

If you use drugs, consider looking for such support services in your neighbourhood and contact them for information and support.

Drug use has different risks related to:

- the type of drug you use
- the way you use drugs
- the environment in which you use drugs.

Using drugs can change the way you make decisions, including decisions about safer sex. Some drugs, such as amphetamines, can increase the desire to have sex. However, they also affect the ability to get or maintain an erection, which can make it more difficult to use condoms.

In this booklet we will mostly look at how to reduce the risks related to the way you use drugs.

The most risky way of using drugs is injecting.

- Use only sterile needles and syringes and your own, clean equipment (alcohol swabs, spoon, water, tourniquet, straws, pipes etc.)
- Do not share any of the equipment.

OVERDOSE PREVENTION

- It is important that you know exactly what drug you are using.
- Never take drugs alone, or in a place where you cannot be found.

SIGNS OF AN OVERDOSE

- lips or nails turning blue
- sudden unresponsiveness
- the person is breathing very slowly or not at all.

WHAT TO DO IN CASE OF AN (OPIOID) OVERDOSE?

In most cases, first aid is not enough. Calling the emergency number 112 immediately is very important. The emergency team can often stop the overdose by giving a medical antidote.

Person is conscious

- Talk to the person.
- Keep the person awake.

Person is unconscious, but breathing

Try to wake the person by

- slapping his/her face
- squeezing the muscle above the collarbone
- pressing your thumb nail on a finger nail
- throwing cold water into his/her face.

Person remains unconscious, person is not breathing

- Call emergency telephone number.
- Stay with the unconscious person.
- Apply first aid (if you are trained).

First aid in case of loss of consciousness can be learnt by almost anybody. First Aid courses are offered by some charitable organisations such as the German Red Cross (Deutsches Rotes Kreuz) or St John Ambulance (Johanniter-Unfall-Hilfe).

DRUG LAWS

Consumers of illegal drugs may come into conflict with the law. For people who are not German citizens, a conviction under the Narcotics Act (Betäubungsmittelgesetz, BtMG) can also lead to expulsion. According to the Narcotics Act, a foreign citizen can be expelled if he*she uses "heroin, cocaine or a similarly dangerous narcotic substance and does not submit to or evade treatment serving his*her rehabilitation".

Hepatitis means 'inflammation of the liver'. A number of viruses (called A, B, C, D and E) can cause hepatitis. Knowing about the most frequently occurring forms of hepatitis, namely C, B and A, is important to protect your health. Depending on the type of hepatitis, the illness can be 'acute' or 'chronic'. An acute illness is when you get better quickly, usually within weeks or months. A chronic illness lasts a long time, possibly the rest of your life. Symptoms may come and go, and some are serious or even fatal.

HEPATITIS C

Transmission

The Hepatitis C virus is much more infectious than HIV, and is transmitted through blood contact, particularly sharing injecting equipment when using intravenous drugs. Even small, invisible amounts of blood are enough to cause infection.

It can also be transmitted during unprofessional tattooing and body piercing (if equipment is not sterilised properly), through unscreened blood transfusions, and from mother to child during pregnancy and childbirth.

Transmission through sexual contact is rare, but possible with certain sexual practices. Men who have sex with men are affected more frequently.

There is no vaccine against Hepatitis C.

Prevention

- Don't share needles and syringes or any other injecting equipment.
- If you are getting tattoos or body piercing, always make sure the equipment is single use only or has been properly sterilised.

Any person who has ever injected drugs or had a tattoo, or a blood transfusion before the blood supply in their country was monitored (mostly before the 1990s), should get tested for hepatitis.



HEPATITIS B

Transmission

Hepatitis B is also much more infectious than HIV, and is transmitted through contact with body fluids (e.g. blood, semen, vaginal fluid and saliva). In western industrialised nations, many new infections occur through sexual contact. Especially at risk are also intravenous drug users if they share needles and syringes with others, and medical personnel through needlestick injuries or injuries sustained during operations.

Prevention

Get vaccinated against Hepatitis B. Do not share any injecting equipment. Practice safer sex: use condoms for anal and vaginal sex. If you are getting tattoos or body piercing, always make sure the equipment is single use only or has been properly sterilised.

HEPATITIS A

Transmission

The Hepatitis A virus is transmitted through contaminated water and food, or contact with faeces through poor hygiene or sexual contact. Hepatitis A is more common in hot countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, Southern and Eastern Europe.

Prevention

Good personal and food hygiene and washing your hands regularly reduce the risk of infection. Avoid contact with faeces and use condoms for anal sex. Vaccination also protects from infection. It is recommended before travelling to countries with a high incidence of Hepatitis A and for men who have sex with men, among others.

Tuberculosis (TB) is contagious and airborne. It predominantly affects young adults in their most productive years. The disease is associated with poverty: the vast majority of TB cases occur in low-income countries. TB is a leading cause of HIV-related deaths worldwide. In some countries with higher numbers of people living with HIV, up to 80% of people with TB test positive for HIV.

Cause

A bacterium called mycobacterium tuberculosis causes TB. It can affect any part of the body, but most commonly attacks the lungs.

There is a difference between latent tuberculosis infection (LTBI) and tuberculosis disease. In tuberculosis disease, the immune system is not longer able to fight the illness. People with infectious tuberculosis of the lungs can pass the virus on to others through close social contact.

If a person has become infected but not ill, this is called latent tuberculosis infection. People with latent TB are not sick, do not have symptoms and also can't pass the disease on to others. People with latent tuberculosis and those who are also infected with HIV have a higher risk of developing tuberculosis disease. To prevent this, preventive treatment is recommended especially for HIV positive patients with latent tuberculosis infection.

Symptoms

The symptoms depend on where in the body the TB bacteria are growing. TB often grows in the lungs, causing a bad cough that lasts longer than two weeks, pain in the chest

and coughing up of blood or sputum. Other symptoms include weakness or fatigue, weight loss, lack of appetite, chills, fever and night sweats. Infection of organs other than the lungs causes a wide range of symptoms.

Test and treatment

Antibiotics are used to kill the bacteria. Because the bacteria have become resistant to some antibiotics, effective TB treatment can be difficult and may take some time (about 6 to 24 months).

Prevention

To stop the spread of TB, it is most important to identify people with TB and their contacts, treating them and vaccinating the children. There is no vaccine available that provides reliable protection for adults. If you think you may have come into contact with TB, see your doctor or health service to be tested.

STIs are infections that are transmitted mainly through sexual contact. They can cause inflammation, skin problems and sometimes also serious illness.

STIs can make HIV transmission more likely because they can damage the skin and mucous membranes, attract more immune system cells for HIV to infect, and increase a HIV positive person's viral load.

They often have no obvious symptoms, but if left untreated, some STIs can cause long-term problems such as infertility. Many can be easily cured with antibiotics.

Safer sex (using condoms) can protect you against most sexually transmitted infections, but not all:

If you are sexually active, have regular sexual health checks at your doctor's practice or at a public clinic (where you can be anonymous).

CHLAMYDIA

Chlamydia is the most common STI and affects mostly younger people. While it often has no symptoms, it can lead to infertility if untreated.

Cause

Chlamydia trachomatis (bacteria)

Symptoms

Many people get no symptoms at all.

Female genital organs can be affected by:

- Increased or unusual vaginal discharge
- Pain when urinating
- Unusual bleeding after sex
- Pain during intercourse
- Pain in the abdomen.

Male genital organs can be affected by:

- Pain when urinating.

Test and Treatment

Chlamydia infection is easy to diagnose through a urine sample or swab, and can be easily cured with a course of antibiotics. Always complete the course of treatment prescribed.

GONORRHOEA

Gonorrhoea is also a very common STI. It too can lead to infertility if untreated.

Cause

Neisseria gonorrhoeae (bacteria)

Symptoms

Male genital organs are often affected by urethral discharge and pain, or a burning sensation when urinating. Female genital organs often show no symptoms, but sometimes one or more of the following:

- Increased and/or unusual yellow or green vaginal discharge
- Pain when urinating
- Pain in the abdomen.

Test and Treatment

Gonorrhoea infection is easy to diagnose through a urine test, swab or smear, and can be cured with a course of antibiotics.

GENITAL HERPES

Genital herpes is a common infection and can't be cured. It is similar to the cold sores that appear around the lips.

Cause

Herpes simplex (HSV-1 or HSV-2, a virus)

Symptoms

- Small painful or itchy blisters around or in the vagina, penis, anus or mouth
- Burning sensation when urinating
- Itchy, swollen and sometimes painful lymph glands.



The symptoms will disappear after two or three weeks, but can reappear later.

Test and Treatment

Herpes infection is, while the blisters are present, easy to diagnose through a swab or a tissue culture as part of a medical check-up. There is no cure for Herpes at present, but a treatment exists to alleviate the symptoms during an acute phase.

SYPHILIS

Syphilis was a common STI before antibiotics were available to cure it. It has recently increased again among men who have sex with men. If left untreated, it can have serious health consequences and even be fatal. Syphilis can also be transmitted from mother to child during pregnancy and lead to abortion and birth defects.

Cause

Treponema pallidum (bacteria)

Symptoms

First stage (two to twelve weeks after infection)

- One or more hard and painless sores up to 1cm wide appear on the penis, in the vagina, mouth or anus. Sometimes it is difficult to see the sores because they are inside the vagina or anus.
- Swollen lymph glands in the neck or groin.

Second stage (from twelve weeks after infection)

- Rash all over the body, but especially on the palms of the hands and soles of the feet
- Flu-like symptoms; headache, sore throat, tiredness, fever
- Loss of hair, bald patches appearing on the head.

These symptoms may come and go over many years.

Third stage (a number of years after infection)

- Affected can be the heart and blood vessels, and also the spinal cord and brain, causing severe complications, disabilities and even death.

If left untreated, this stage occurs in about 30% of cases.

Test and Treatment

Syphilis infection is diagnosed with a blood test as part of a medical check-up. It can take up to three months for the infection to be detectable by the test. Results are available about a week after the test, and syphilis can be easily treated with antibiotic injections. However, regular medical follow-up is required to ensure the infection has been fully cured. Always complete the course of treatment and return for the final follow-up appointment.

GENITAL WARTS

Cause

Human papilloma virus (HPV)

Symptoms

Symptoms appear a few weeks or up to eight months after infection:

- Warts around or in the vagina, penis and anus: these are painless, but can be itchy. Genital warts can also occur on the face or in the mouth and throat.
- Some strains of human papilloma virus (HPV) are associated with the development of cancer of the cervix and anus.

Test and Treatment

If they are visible, genital warts are easy to diagnose during a medical check-up or with a pap smear. Doctors can remove them by painting a solution on them that makes them shrink and disappear, or by freezing, cauterising or surgery. It is important to get treatment early, as the warts can spread: the longer you wait, the more warts there are, and the longer the treatment will take. The warts may recur and you should regularly check to see if they have reappeared.

Prevention

Find out about getting vaccinated against human papilloma virus infection. This reduces the risk of cancer developing from genital warts. Different countries have different vaccination schemes for HPV. Condoms can lower the risk of infection during sexual contact.

TRICHOMONIASIS

Cause

Trichomonas (parasites)

Symptoms

- An itchy and sore vagina, as well as unusual discharge, which may be yellow/green, frothy and smelly
- Less commonly, an inflammation of the foreskin and discharge from the penis.
- Pain when urinating may also occur.
- Sometimes there are no symptoms.

Test and Treatment

Trichomoniasis infection is easy to diagnose with a swab as part of a medical check-up and can be easily cured with a single course of antibiotic treatment. It is important that you follow the doctor's directions properly. You must not drink any alcohol on the day of treatment.

If you have not used any contraceptive, or a condom breaks and you do not want to get pregnant, then act as quickly as possible. You can get emergency contraception up to 72 hours after sexual contact, which will reduce the risk of becoming pregnant. You can get emergency contraception from a family planning or health service.

UNWANTED PREGNANCIES

If your period is late, then get a pregnancy test – you can buy a self-test kit from a pharmacy, or go to your doctor or a family planning service. It is important to find out as soon as possible whether you are pregnant if you do not want to have a baby. Abortion can be arranged in most countries, but it is not usually carried out after 12 weeks.

If you are pregnant and have decided in favour of an abortion, ask a family planning counselling service about your rights and obligations.

WANTED PREGNANCIES

Keep yourself and your baby safe. If you are pregnant and want to have the baby, your doctor or a counselling service will advise you regarding your rights to health care during the pregnancy and childbirth, and about you and your baby's rights once the baby is born.

IT'S UP TO YOU!

Choosing a reliable contraceptive is important when you want to avoid pregnancy or would like to wait with having a child. But, always use a condom to protect yourself from HIV and from other sexually transmitted infections.

Always discuss your contraceptive options with a doctor or family planning service.

11 Keep yourself safe

ALWAYS USE A CONDOM

Using condoms and water-based lubricant protects you from HIV, hepatitis B and C and other sexually transmitted infections, and prevents pregnancy.

ALWAYS USE A NEW NEEDLE AND SYRINGE

Using a new sterile needle and syringe every time, and not sharing any equipment protects you from HIV and hepatitis B and C.

LOOK AFTER YOUR BODY

Get tested for HIV, hepatitis B and C. Get vaccinated for hepatitis B.

- Go for regular sexual health check-ups, even if you don't have symptoms.
- Always complete any course of treatment prescribed by a doctor.
- Seek PEP if you have had unsafe sex, have shared a needle or syringe, or had a condom break.

We hope that reading this booklet has been helpful to you. Knowing about safer sex and safer drug use can save lives. Now that you know the facts, and how to protect yourself and your community, you can also inform others.



12 Further Information

The Internet offers a lot of information on many topics, including HIV and AIDS, hepatitis, STIs, TB, safer drug use, safer sex and sexuality. You can gain a lot of useful additional knowledge this way.

But, information found on the Internet, in a book or anywhere else cannot replace person-to-person medical advice. Only a medical professional can give you medical advice after consulting with you and gaining knowledge about you as an individual.

It is not always easy to tell the quality and accuracy of information found on the Internet. Some is not based on scientific evidence and may be incorrect or misleading.

The following tips are based on the HON-code, a code of ethics and quality for health and medical information on the Internet:

- Websites provided by public health services or publicly funded and recognised institutions (public hospitals, universities, non-government organisations...) usually contain practical and reliable information.
- Look for information providers who are likely to have your interest at heart, and consider how any commercial interests, ideology, politics, religious or cultural beliefs may influence them.
- Ask your health service provider or local HIV/AIDS organisation for a list of reliable and relevant websites to visit.
- If in doubt, use more than one website for a balanced view and to check the information.
- Check the source of the information provided: who has written the health information? Is this person qualified? If not, does he/she state the source of the information?
- Look for the evidence used to support claims made on websites.
- Check the privacy policy of a website to know what information about you is collected and for what purpose.



- Many reliable websites have a seal of certification from a trusted accrediting organisation like the Health On the Net Foundation. This certification means that the site is open about authority, authorship, confidentiality and funding, is up-to-date, honest about advertising and distinguishes clearly between advertising and editorial content. Always click on the certification icon to make sure the certification is still valid.
- You can confirm the status of certification of a website using the HONcode Toolbar, which you can download at: <http://www.hon.ch/HONcode/Plugin/Plugins.html>
- If you are still in doubt, contact a health professional.

AIDS and HIV

Current Knowledge, Protection and Treatment



Additional information for Germany and Austria:

**Bundeszentrale
für gesundheitliche Aufklärung**
(Federal Centre for Health Education)
Maarweg 149–161 · 50825 Köln
[www.bzga.de/infomaterialien/
hiv-sti-praevention/](http://www.bzga.de/infomaterialien/hiv-sti-praevention/)

Deutsche AIDS-Hilfe e.V.
(German AIDS Service Organisation Inc.)
Wilhelmstraße 138 · 10963 Berlin
www.aidshilfe.de

Aids Hilfe Wien (AIDS Help Vienna)
Mariahilfer Gürtel 4 · 1060 Wien
www.aids.at

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