

GETTING the FACTS about HIV & AIDS!

AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome)

A normal CD4 count is 1,150. When your CD4 cell count is less than 200, you are considered to have AIDS.

AIDS is a collection of infections that occur once HIV has deteriorated your body's ability to combat diseases. If you have HIV, you will not necessarily develop AIDS. There are a whole bunch of different illnesses that are associated with having AIDS.

Neither HIV or AIDS has a cure, but there are drug treatments called anti-retrovirals (AVRs) that can delay the onset of AIDS. A healthy immune system will also delay the onset of AIDS.

Ways to avoid HIV infection:

Sexual Contact

There are several ways to avoid infection through sexual contact -
Abstain from sex, or if you do have sex, use a male or female condom every time. You can also reduce your risk by avoiding having multiple sexual partners and avoiding putting yourself in risky situations where there is a chance that coercive sex or rape may occur (such as places where there is a lot of drug and alcohol use)

Blood and blood products

Do not share needles or injection drug equipment with others, make sure that any equipment, including tattoo, piercing and circumcision equipment, is properly sterilized.

Mother-to-Child Transmission

Women can be tested for HIV during the antenatal period and if she is HIV positive (or if her partner is HIV positive) there are some different things that can be done. She can be counseled on her options and may receive treatment that could reduce the risk of transmission to the child. There are also things that can be done during the baby's delivery to minimize the risk of infection, such as having a Caesarean section, or receiving Nevirapine. After the baby is born, using formula instead of breastfeeding can also reduce the risk of infection. It is important, if you are pregnant, to talk to your doctor about your options.

Delaying when you start having sex is one of the best forms of protection for young people.

You can also avoid HIV infection by practicing other forms of safer sex like kissing, masturbation, using hands to stimulate your partner, dry humping, oral sex on a man or woman using a condom or a latex sheild.