

ody production, a HI test (antibody test) can be negative even though the virus is in the body. It may be 3 to 6 months from the time of exposure to the virus before the test becomes positive for the antibody.

In Nova Scotia we can be quite confident that a negative blood test result is accurate- FALSE

Because there can be a delay of 3 to 6 months before the body reacts to the HI virus with antibody production, a HI test can be negative even though the virus is in the body. This is known as a false-negative result. It may be 3 to 6 months from the time of exposure to the virus before the test becomes positive. Because there is the possibility of a false-negative result, all persons should avoid risky behaviours.

Because of the procedure followed, in Nova Scotia we can be confident that a positive result on the AIDS test is accurate TRUE

The two ELISA tests and the Western Blot test described above must all be positive before a test is reported as positive in Nova Scotia. Given the sensitive nature of these tests the results are considered extremely accurate.

Persons with a positive AIDS(HIV) test can transmit the virus to others TRUE

A positive HIV antibody test indicates that the virus is or has been in the body - there is no readily available way to identify the virus itself. We must therefore assume that all persons with a positive test can transmit the virus.

At present we do not have the technology to determine which person is carrying the virus or which person is merely antibody positive.

So, a positive test that shows you to have HIV antibodies in your blood:

- DOES NOT necessarily mean you have AIDS or an AIDS-related illness;
- DOES NOT necessarily mean you will develop AIDS;
- DOES NOT mean that you are protected against AIDS in the future.

A positive test that shows you have HI virus antibodies in your blood DOES mean:

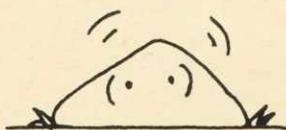
- You probably have the HI virus in your blood and other body fluids;
- You must assume that you are able to pass the virus on to others through sexual contact, or through your blood;
- You must take precautions.

Donating blood carries risk of contracting AIDS FALSE

In Canada, there is NO possibility of contracting HIV from the needle used when you donate blood. Blood banks and other collection centres use sterile equipment and disposable needles. The need for blood is always acute, and people who are not at increased risk for AIDS are urged to continue to donate blood as they have in the past. Donating blood in other parts of the world may not involve the use of sterile equipment so before donating blood in other countries check the procedures followed. To contract AIDS there must be an exchange of body fluids - donating blood does not involve any exchange.

Currently, anyone receiving a blood transfusion runs a high risk of contracting AIDS- FALSE

The risk of contracting AIDS through a blood transfusion is extremely low. Since November, 1985 the Canadian Red Cross, which handles all blood donations in Canada, tests every unit of blood for the HIV antibodies. The tests described above are extremely sensitive and any contaminated blood is discarded. The risk of contracting AIDS through a blood transfusion was only one in one million prior to



initiation of blood screening; the risk is now significantly lower.

All blood that tests positive by the initial screening test is removed from the transfusion pool.

As an additional measure, persons who may be high risk for HIV infection are advised to refrain from donating blood. Sperm banks and organ banks have been advised by Health and Welfare Canada to test potential donors for HIV antibody and not to accept sperm or organ donations from individuals who are antibody positive.

AIDS TRANSMISSION

To date, the HI virus is known to be transmitted in only four ways:

1. Through sexual intercourse;
2. Through sharing contaminated needles or syringes;
3. Through transfusion of infected blood or blood products (this method is very rare since blood banks are now taking every precaution to ensure the safety of blood and blood products);
4. From an infected mother to her foetus in the womb.

AIDS is not an easily transmissible disease. Direct blood-to-blood or semen-to-blood contact appears necessary to transmit HIV. There is no evidence that AIDS can be transmitted through air, water, food or casual body contact.

The three body fluids that most commonly have been shown to transmit AIDS virus are: blood, semen and vaginal secretions TRUE

The HI virus is in highly concentrated amounts in blood, blood products and semen. It is in a lesser concentration in vaginal fluid. But some researchers think it's enough to transmit the virus. The HIV has also been found in trace amounts in tears, saliva and sweat, but there has never been a case documented to have been caused by these alone. The virus is *not* in sufficient concentration in these body fluids.

The AIDS virus is highly contagious through hugging and kissing FALSE

Unlike most transmissible diseases, i.e. colds, flu, measles, etc., AIDS is not transmitted through sneezing, coughing, eating or drinking using the same utensils, or by merely being around an infected person. No cases have been found where AIDS has been transmitted through casual (non-sexual) contact to a household member, co-worker or friend.

Since there is no exchange of body fluids in hugging and dry kissing, these activities carry no risk of transmission.

Although the HI virus has been found in the saliva of some AIDS patients, there is not a single case of AIDS that is known or suspected of having been transmitted by kissing. If AIDS were transmitted by kissing, many family members would be expected to have developed the condition since they hug and kiss each other, they play, eat, bathe and sleep together. They share bathrooms, food, kitchenware and clothes.

To contract AIDS, infected body fluids must pass from one person to another.

The AIDS virus(HIV) is highly contagious through sexual intercourse PROBABLY TRUE

HIV is highly contagious for male or female recipients of intercourse if no condom is



used. Present studies indicate there is the greatest risk to the recipient of anal intercourse, high risk to the female from an infected male during vaginal intercourse and moderate risk to the male from the infected female - more so during menstruation - if no condom is used.

The HI virus can be transmitted from public toilets, drinking fountains and swimming pools FALSE

The HI virus requires person-to-person exchange of body fluids. It does not survive on surfaces or in fluids outside the body and cannot be acquired from them.

There are no cases of AIDS suspected of having been transmitted through swimming pools, public toilets or drinking fountains. Even if the virus were to survive for a short period of time, it would be killed by the chlorine used to disinfect swimming pools and drinking water.

You can acquire the AIDS virus(HIV) by sharing eating utensils with someone who has AIDS FALSE

The AIDS virus is fragile and does not survive outside the body. To acquire AIDS an exchange of body fluids must take place, i.e. semen in intercourse or blood exchange as occurs when drug users share needles. No incident has ever been recorded of the virus passed by sharing utensils. Six years of experience indicates that AIDS is not transmitted in households where people drink or eat from common dishes or utensils. The HI virus, even if it were to survive outside the body, would be killed by detergents used in the normal washing of dishes and other eating utensils.

It is possible to contract AIDS by sharing razors with an infected person PROBABLY FALSE

Not likely, since it appears to take direct infusion of infected blood into your bloodstream to transmit the disease. There has never been a documented case by this route; however, if there were enough blood on the razor and you had open cuts on your skin then there is a very slight possibility of transmission.

It would be prudent to avoid sharing things where blood-to-blood contact could occur.

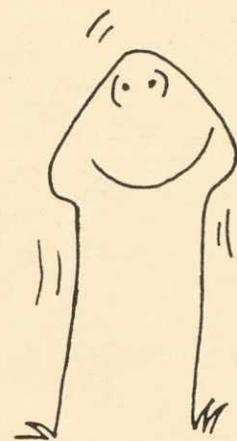
Earpiercing is one possible way of spreading the AIDS virus PROBABLY FALSE

Not likely, since blood-to-blood contact is required. However, if unsterile equipment is re-used there is a very slight possibility of transmission.

Sharing hypodermic needles puts one at high risk for contracting AIDS TRUE

The common practice of mixing blood with drugs and sharing it intravenously is responsible for the high incidence of AIDS among drug users in the USA. This group only represents 0.4 per cent of the AIDS cases in Canada.

The low rate of cases from IV drug abuse in Canada is a similar pattern to other countries such as Australia. The difference from American figures may be due to a smaller drug abuse problem. But more importantly it may stem from the fact that needles and syringes are more readily available here and are therefore not shared as frequently. They can be purchased at most phar-



macies over the counter, while in the US a doctor's prescription is necessary. Nevertheless, drug abuse by itself is dangerous in any situation, particularly if needles are shared.

A person can transmit the AIDS virus even when there are no symptoms of the disease TRUE

This is one of the most important features of the disease. If the virus is present in the body, whether or not there are symptoms, it can be passed and infect others by the exchange of body fluids.

Infected females can transmit the AIDS virus to males during sexual intercourse TRUE

The risk to the male is increased if no condom is used and he has a cut or break in the skin of his penis. This provides a way for the virus to enter his bloodstream. An infected woman who is menstruating may also increase her partner's risk because of the presence of the infected blood and other fluids. She should abstain from sexual activities that would expose her partner to blood. Used tampons or napkins should be carefully wrapped and disposed of.

Lesbians are at low risk for contracting AIDS TRUE

Unless a lesbian shares IV drug needles and syringes or has heterosexual sex with infected partners, she is at very low risk.

There is no evidence of AIDS being transmitted from an infected woman to another woman through sexual contact. However, contact with menstrual blood, which may contain HIV, should be avoided.

A woman who is having her menstrual period may become infected if she has unprotected sexual intercourse with a carrier of AIDS TRUE

Not because she is menstruating, but because she is having unprotected intercourse.

The AIDS virus can be spread from a female to her unborn child during pregnancy TRUE

The HI virus can pass from the bloodstream of the mother, through the placenta and into the bloodstream of the foetus. Not all pregnant women who have the virus transmit it, but there is no way to identify which HIV positive mother will and which won't. Current recommendations are that these women should not become pregnant.

The majority of infected children acquire AIDS of HIV from their infected mothers. A few children developed AIDS from blood transfusions prior to screening of the blood supplies and there is one case of AIDS in Australia which is reported to have been transmitted to an infant through mother's milk. So far, there are no reported cases of AIDS in the U.S. or Canada linked with breastfeeding, but any woman who is positive for HIV antibodies should not breast-feed her child.