

INTRODUCTION

This brochure is designed to provide you with information about AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) and other STDs (Sexually Transmitted Diseases). We have asked Dr. A. Campbell, an expert in this field, to write this brochure.

Sexually transmitted diseases are a serious subject and you probably will have some questions after reading this brochure. If you do have any questions, please speak to your **doctor or another health professional** to ensure you get the facts.

WHAT IS AIDS?

AIDS is caused by a virus called HIV which attacks the body's immune system, reducing its ability to fight disease. Over time, victims of AIDS become extremely vulnerable to diseases and infections that usually do not pose a threat to someone whose immune system is working normally: as a result, people with AIDS may die of illnesses to which non-infected people are immune.

HOW IS THE AIDS VIRUS SPREAD?

AIDS can only start to develop after the virus reaches the bloodstream. Even though the virus may be present in one person's body fluids (such as blood or semen), **it has to get into another person's bloodstream in order to cause infection.**

Infected individuals, even those without symptoms, may be able to pass on the virus to others and should take necessary precautions.

The AIDS virus is transmitted in four known ways:

- through sexual contact with an infected person
- through sharing contaminated needles or syringes
- through transfusion of infected blood or blood products
- from an infected mother to an infant in the womb or during breastfeeding.

During sexual intercourse, for example, the AIDS virus in a man's semen may get into his partner's blood through tiny cuts or scratches in the vagina, anus or mouth.

Intravenous drug users may get AIDS through sharing needles, if infected blood from one user is