



The Gender Centre Inc. Fact Sheet
HIV/AIDS Issues
For Transsexual People

Reviewed July 1st 2008

Who is at risk?

All people are at risk of contracting the H.I.V./AIDS virus regardless of their age, gender or sexuality. Anyone who has unprotected vaginal, anal or oral sex is at risk of contracting H.I.V. Infected needles and syringes or exposure to infected blood and blood products may also transmit H.I.V.

People with gender issues, however, face unique risks and it is most important to be aware of these. This Fact sheet is to help you and your sexual partners manage these risks.

How can I protect myself?

Hair Removal

If you shave or wax your body or pubic hair, be careful of cuts and scraping. Cover any cuts and abrasions before sex and never allow anyone's body fluids (blood, semen or vaginal fluids) on damaged skin. Be particularly careful if you shave your pubic hair, legs, chest or armpits and then engage in "trick sex" (having intercourse between closed thighs or under armpits etc.).

Needles

Some people may use syringes/needles for hormone injections. The H.I.V. and other dangerous viruses including hepatitis can hitch a ride in a shared needle or syringe. If you inject your own hormones or help friends with theirs, keep a clean supply and never share needles or syringes.

Needles and syringes are available from the Gender Centre exchange program. They stock correct size needles and syringes for the administration of hormones and for intravenous drug use.

Needles and syringes can also be obtained from many chemists as part of their exchange programs for a small fee. Many community health centres and agencies provide a needle exchange, or ring your local drug information service for their location.

Taping, Strapping and Tucking

If you are taping, strapping or tucking you could create a warm, moist area leading to skin disorders, chaffing and dermatitis. Removing tape roughly could result in damaged/broken skin. Any of these increase the risk of the virus penetrating your skin during sex, particularly if you get someone else's body fluids onto that region as might happen from unprotected "trick" sex.

So,

Always use condoms

Try to keep these areas as dry and clean as possible (unscented sterilised talcum powder may help) and let them breath a bit when you're in private

Remove tape carefully and remove any traces of adhesive with something gentle and soothing like eucalyptus oil.

Surgery

If you have recently undergone any surgery that has involved any areas of your body that may be exposed to body fluids during sex, then be sure to cover the area until your skins has completely healed.

Douching

If you have, a neo-vagina (created through surgery) a natural vagina or engage in receptive anal intercourse you may practice douching to keep these passages clean. Douching weakens the lining of the anal passage or vagina and removes friendly bacteria and mucous, exposing the porous membranes (surface skin lining) and increasing the risk of H.I.V. transmission and the risk of contracting general infections.

The practice of frequent douching is generally discouraged by health workers. If you feel you must douche for personal comfort, then it should only be practiced 2–3 times a week at most.

If you have a vagina then it is best to try and keep it slightly acidic as this will minimise the damage to friendly bacteria, while discouraging infections. This can be achieved by using a product called aci-gel that can be bought at the chemist. Use about 1 third to a quarter of an applicator 2 times a week. If you continue to douche, try to maintain the acidity by using a mixture of warm water and vinegar (one part vinegar to 10 parts water).

Remember douching and gels are not an alternative for safe sex. Only condoms can protect you during intercourse from the H.I.V. virus and other sexually transmissible infections.

Douche equipment should never be shared without thorough cleaning between uses.

If you are concerned about vaginal odours, see a doctor rather than douching. Doctors who work in women's health, for example through Family Planning N.S.W. have experience in vaginal care.

Sexual Activity

If you have a neo-vagina and engage in unsafe sex (unprotected) then you not only face the same risk of contracting the H.I.V. virus as biological women from receptive intercourse, you may also face risks that are specific to your situation.

The AIDS virus (H.I.V.) is found in an infected persons body tissues, and in blood, semen, vaginal fluid and breast milk.

Although a neo-vagina may produce some lubrication during intercourse it may not be enough for comfortable sexual activity. If you have sex without extra lubrication (Wet Stuff, K.Y. Jelly) small undetectable breaks or tears in the vaginal lining can occur. These breaks and tears increase the risk of the virus being transmitted from the partner's body fluids. This could also happen if you have a vagina that isn't wide enough to comfortably accommodate your partner's penis.

The AIDS virus (H.I.V.) can be passed on through receptive or insertive anal sex.

Infected semen can enter the blood stream through the lining of the back passage (rectum).

The H.I.V. virus may be present in the lining of the rectum and come into contact with the penis and get in through tiny skin tears or through the opening of the penis.

Always ensure that the "giver" wears a condom.

You have a right to protect yourself. Remember a partner can carry the H.I.V. virus whether they identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or heterosexual. H.I.V. does not discriminate.

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