Your Child & & AIDS

AN INFORMATIONAL GUIDE FOR PARENTS WITH CHILDREN IN DAYCARE AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS re you a parent with a child in daycare or school?
Are you concerned that your child may come in contact with a schoolmate who has AIDS?

All parents are concerned about the well-being of their children. This is especially true when a fatal illness is involved. It is important for you to know that your child is not at risk for contracting AIDS through school or playground contact with other children. Although there are many unanswered questions about AIDS, much is known about how it is transmitted. The purpose of this guide is to answer some of the major questions that you may have about AIDS and relevant school health policies.

ALTHOUGH AIDS IS A SERIOUS ILLNESS, IT IS NOT EASILY TRANSMITTED. AIDS is a disease affecting the immune system. The best medical information establishes that AIDS is caused by a virus which spreads through sexual or blood-to-blood contact. As of January 1986, there were 229 children under the age of 13 who had been diagnosed as having AIDS. In all the cases investigated, the children were either infected with the virus from blood products, or it was passed on to them during pregnancy or at birth by their mothers. THERE HAVE BEEN NO CASES OF CHILDREN GETTING AIDS FROM OTHER CHILDREN.

What Is AIDS?

"AIDS" stands for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, a disease which breaks down a part of the body's immune system. This breakdown leaves the body open to a variety of illnesses. It is these diseases, which are normally not a threat to the healthy child or adult, which can result in death.

What Causes AIDS?

AIDS is caused by a virus that attacks a particular type of cell in the immune system. The virus is variously known as HTLV-III, LAV, or ARV. The AIDS virus is not airborne, nor is it transmitted through coughing, sneezing, food, shared silverware or glasses, etc. The virus is known to be spread through sexual or blood-to-blood contact. Infection with the AIDS virus does not necessarily result in AIDS. In fact, evidence suggests that only a minority of those who have become infected and develop antibodies will go on to become sick.

How Do Children Get AIDS?

There are only a few specific and limited means by which the AIDS virus has been transferred to children:

- 1. From the mother during pregnancy or at birth: Women who are infected with the AIDS virus may pass it on to their unborn children during pregnancy or at birth. It is possible that the AIDS virus may also be transmitted through breast milk.
- 2. Blood transfusions or blood products:
 A few children have developed AIDS from blood or blood products contaminated with the AIDS virus. Current screening programs have reduced the possibility of this happening to almost zero.



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3. Some teenagers have contracted AIDS through the sharing of hypodermic needles and/or sexual activity.

THERE ARE NO CASES OF YOUNG CHILDREN CONTRACTING AIDS OR THE AIDS VIRUS INFECTION FROM OTHER CHILDREN.

Can My Child Get AIDS From Playing With A Child Who Has AIDS?

The answer to this question is NO!
The AIDS virus is not airborne. No transmission has ever been traced to contact with clothing, food, dishes, utensils, toilet seats, or even chewed pencils. Your child cannot get AIDS by standing close to someone who has AIDS. Breathing, sneezing, touching, coughing, and wrestling have not been shown to spread AIDS either.

What About Biting?

There are NO recorded cases of AIDS transmission via bites. However, to protect their schoolmates from possible exposure to a variety of infections, school officials already routinely exclude children who are known to bite. In those families where children have played, eaten, slept, kissed, and fought with a brother or sister with AIDS, there have been no cases of child-to-child or child-to-adult virus transmission.



What If A Child With AIDS Gets Cut Or Injured At School? Is There Any Risk To My Child?

No. Skin is an excellent barrier to infection. AIDS could only be transmitted if infected blood were to enter your child's body directly. Even if this highly unlikely situation were to occur, research studies have demonstrated that the risk of virus transmission is extremely low. Routine care of cuts and scrapes, washing with soap and water and/or use of a mild antiseptic, will protect your child.

So Little Is Known About The Disease And The Incubation Period Is So Long, How Can I Trust That What Is Known Today Won't Change In The Future?

A lot IS known about AIDS at present. AIDS and AIDS transmission have been under study for seven years. Thousands of cases of AIDS in the United States have been studied. Accumulating research indicates that the basic scientific understanding of AIDS virus transmission is correct and will not be revised in any major way.

What Can I Do To Protect My Child From Getting AIDS At School?

No special precautions are needed.

- To avoid unnecessary anxiety, learn the facts about ATDS.
- Urge teachers and staff of your child's school and/or daycare center to also become educated about AIDS.
- Begin to educate your children about AIDS.
- Insist that teenagers be informed about AIDS whenever sex education or drug abuse is discussed in school.

What Are Local School Policies Surrounding AIDS That Protect My Child?

Currently in California, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction has recommended that each county establish its own AIDS policies, following the guidelines set down by the National Centers for Disease Control which are as follows:

- Children with AIDS should be screened individually before admittance into the public school system. This screening should be done by the child's physician together with the parents or guardian, the local department of public health and school officials. If the child has uncontrollable behavior (such as biting), is unable to control bodily waste, has open lesions (which cannot be covered), or is too ill to attend school, he or she should be kept home.
- The above procedures, combined with existing guidelines to control the spread of other infectious diseases are sufficient to prevent the spread of AIDS in licensed daycare programs and school situations.

The presence of a child with AIDS poses no threat to your child or other children. Children with AIDS are capable of living active lives. During their periods of good health, there is no reason for them to be isolated or restricted to their homes. The love and support of playmates and neighbors can contribute significantly to their emotional and physical well being.

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