Facts about AIDS for drug users

If you inject drugs you are in a high risk AIDS group

THIS LEAFLET HAS BEEN PREPARED BY USERS, WORKERS FROM STREET AGENCIES AND MEDICAL STAFF TO HELP YOU UNDERSTAND THIS RISK

AIDS affects drug users who share needles. **It affects both men and women.** You get it in the same way you get hepatitis — by sharing a needle with someone who is infectious. It is also transmitted by sexual intercourse with someone infectious.

This leaflet gives you the facts, and advice on how to reduce your risk.

How to avoid the risk of getting AIDS

For Drug Users, the easiest way to avoid these risks is NOT TO INJECT DRUGS.

But if you do inject.

ALWAYS use your own set of works. NEVER SHARE WITH anybody, NO MATTER HOW WELL THEY MAY SEEM TO YOU.

Don't mix your gear up in a spoon used by other people or flush out your works in water used by other people.

After you've used your works BEND THE NEEDLE and THROW IT AWAY SOMEWHERE SAFE, or put it in a tin.

Dispose of your needles safely.

Don't leave them around where people can be stabbed accidentally.

Don't leave them where other people might use them.

If you're on the rent scene and/or gay reduce your number of sexual partners.

Avoid anal intercourse.

In any sexual intercourse, use a condom.

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What is AIDS?

AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) is a condition where the body's immune system — the part that fights infection — becomes damaged.

AIDS is caused by a virus called HTLV 3.

When your immune system is damaged, your body is unable to protect itself from certain diseases. You then develop serious infections and types of cancer because the body's defences have been weakened. These can result in death.

The HTLV 3 Virus is spreading amongst drug users in Britain.

It seems that up to 1 in 10 of the people who contract this virus go on to develop AIDS and may die. In addition some may develop other illnesses.

The rest seem to carry the virus and not develop AIDS — BUT THESE PEOPLE ARE INFECTIOUS TO OTHERS through more needle sharing or sexual contact. In some parts of America and Europe as many as half the drug users tested have been infected with this virus but THERE IS STILL TIME to stop it spreading in the United Kingdom.

What are the risks for drug users?

Because the virus is passed in blood — the main risk to drug users comes from **sharing needles, syringes or other equipment used for mixing and injecting drugs**. (This includes skin popping, as well as into a vein).

Sexual contact — not just 'Gay' contact — also puts you at risk. The virus can be transmitted by an HTLV carrier to sexual partners, and it can also be transmitted in pregnant women, who are infected with the virus, to the baby. There is a good help-line run by the TERRENCE HIGGINS TRUST where you can get advice about this risk. Their phone number is 01-833 2971 and their phones are open from 7.00 pm to 10.00 pm every night of the week. You can talk to them in total confidence.

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with

THE TERRENCE HIGGINS TRUST

A registered charity to inform, advise and help on A.I.D.S. (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome).

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HELPLINE

01-833 2971

7PM-10PM WEEKDAYS 3PM-10PM WEEKENDS

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