



planned
parenthood
TORONTO

**YOUR
HEALTH.
YOUR
CHOICE.**

HIV/AIDS

Talk to your partner(s) about sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and your health before you have sex. You can pass on an STI without knowing you have one. During sex, you can use latex condoms to lower your chances of getting STIs.

What is HIV/AIDS?

HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus. HIV is a virus that leads to AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome).

HIV attacks the body's immune system. When the immune system is weakened, the body loses its ability to fight off germs, infections, and viruses. A person is diagnosed with AIDS when they have HIV and become ill from one of the many infections or cancers that the body can no longer fight off. The amount of time that it takes for HIV to progress to an AIDS diagnosis varies from one person to another. It is a reportable infection, meaning that if you test positive for HIV, you may be contacted by a clinic or health department to get contact information for current and past sexual partners for notification and testing purposes. Your name is not disclosed when a current or past sexual partner is notified. However, if you have been tested for HIV anonymously, public health will not be able to contact you.

Who gets HIV/AIDS?

Anyone can contract HIV, regardless of age, gender and sexual orientation. Presently, women, youth, people who use injection drugs, aboriginals and young gay men are the fastest growing populations contracting HIV, however, HIV can be found in every community around the world.

How do you get HIV/AIDS?

You can only get HIV by coming into contact with infected blood, semen (cum), vaginal fluids and breast milk. The highest risk activities for contracting HIV are unprotected penetrative vaginal or anal sex and sharing needles. Oral sex is considered low risk for HIV infection. You cannot get HIV from touching, kissing, mutual or solo masturbation, inserting fingers into the vagina or anus.

How can you tell if you have HIV/AIDS?

You can't. Often people experience no signs or symptoms when they become infected with HIV.

Sometimes, at the point of infection, some people may experience flu like symptoms that often go away within a week. AIDS is a diagnosis that is given by your doctor. AIDS in Canada is diagnosed when a person has HIV and one of a number of "opportunistic infections" including pneumonia and some forms and cancers.

It is important to use condoms or a latex barrier with sexual partners to decrease the risk of getting a sexually transmitted infection.

How do you get tested for HIV/AIDS?

Testing your blood for HIV/AIDS involves testing for your any antibodies that your body may have produced in its attempt to fight the HIV/AIDS virus. The presence of the antibody suggests you have been infected with the virus. It generally takes about 12 weeks for your body to develop enough antibodies for an accurate test result. This is called the “window period”. You can get tested at your doctor’s office or a clinic. Many places, including Planned Parenthood CHC, offer anonymous HIV tests. Your test results cannot be traced to you. You do not have to give your address, phone number or health card number. A health care provider should never test you without getting your consent first.

You Have Two Options:

Standard HIV antibody blood testing involves drawing your blood and sending it out to the Ministry of Health lab where they test it for antibodies to HIV. This test usually takes about 30 minutes and involves a return visit to get your results. It usually takes 2 to 3 weeks to get your results. You have to return to the clinic to get your results.

New Rapid HIV point-of-care screening tests are done by a finger-prick blood sample and results are assessed on site. The whole procedure should take about 40 minutes. If the test shows a negative result, you are considered not infected with the HIV/AIDS virus. If the test result indicates a positive, the test is sent out to a Ministry of Health lab to confirm the positive result. In this case, you would have to come back to get your results.

Both tests involve pre- and post-test counseling and are 99.5% accurate. It’s your choice!

Is there a cure for HIV/AIDS?

No. There is no cure for HIV or AIDS. There are, however, a number of treatment options available to deal with specific health issues that may arise due to complications with HIV and AIDS.

How can I protect myself from HIV/AIDS?

- ★ Use a latex condom during vaginal sex, anal sex and oral sex. There are now condoms for men and women.
- ★ Use a dental dam for oral sex on a woman, or vagina to vagina sex.
- ★ Use a clean needle or clean properly with bleach.
- ★ Refrain from penetrative vaginal or anal sex.

If you need further information or would like to book an appointment, call:

Planned Parenthood Toronto Health Services for youth ages 13 to 29. 416-927-7171. Health Services offers same-day, scheduled and drop-in appointments. For more information visit www.ppt.on.ca.

Women’s Programming at the Bay Centre for Birth Control for women of all ages at 416-351-3700.

Youth can also access information about sexual health by calling the Teen Sex InfoLine at 416-961-3200 or chat live using MSN messenger at spiderbytes@hotmail.com from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. Monday to Wednesday and 12 noon to 6 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. You can also email us a question anytime at askus@spiderbytes.ca or visit www.spiderbytes.ca.