

**Saving
Lives for
Eternity**

Barbados Evangelical Association

WHAT IS AIDS?

AIDS is the name of the disease caused by the HIV virus. It is a natural disease. It is not a curse from Heaven because God is mad at mankind for immoral sexual behaviour nor is it a consequence of some magical or witchcraft action.

The acronym AIDS stands for:

- A = Acquired:** No one with an unaffected mother is born with the sickness. One has to contract it from somewhere.
- I = Immune:** The immune system, formed by the blood cells that are the soldiers of the body against infection and disease, has been weakened by the HIV virus.
- D = Deficiency:** The white blood cells, soldiers of the body against infection and disease, have been destroyed and the body is not able to defend itself against even the mildest of infections.
- S = Syndrome:** It is not a single disease. It is the final stage of an infection characterised by a 'cluster' of illnesses.

The HIV virus incites an infection that initiates the decline and gradually the elimination of the white blood cells in the body. The white blood cells are the primary elements responsible for the protection of the body. Persons infected with the HIV virus are referred to as HIV-positive. Over time (months or even years), HIV-positive people eventually contract "opportunistic infections." These "opportunistic infections" do not occur in people who are not HIV-positive, but rather attack the weakened immune systems of HIV-positive people.

The HIV virus is quite frail. It requires a moist environment in order to survive. It dies rapidly on any dry surface, in dust, on normal skin, on tables, benches, toilet seats, etc. It needs a body fluid as host and in order to be transmitted. Once a person is infected with the HIV virus, that person's bodily fluids contain the virus. The HIV virus has been

detected in blood, semen, vaginal fluids, breast milk, liquid stools, urine, saliva, and tears. It is very important to realise that the fluids like blood, semen, and vaginal fluids contain a lot more of the HIV virus and are much more dangerous than the other bodily fluids. Other bodily fluids such as saliva and tears contain only a trace of the HIV virus and are not considered to be dangerous.

The HIV virus needs a “front door” — an entry point — where the bodily fluid carrying the virus may enter the uninfected person. The entry point may be the mucosal membranes of the vagina, anus, tip of the penis, or mouth, or the virus may enter through an open wound or break in the epidermis of the skin.

The HIV virus cannot enter through healthy, intact skin that acts as a thick barrier. There must be some kind of a cut, a scratch, or a wound in order for the virus to enter the body.

How Does HIV/AIDS Transmission Occur?

The transmission can occur from an infected person to an uninfected person:

1) By SEX:

- Heterosexual (man with woman).
- Homosexual (man with man or woman with woman) by anal or oral sex.
- Bisexual (with both men and women).



In a country like Barbados sexual intercourse is the predominant mode of HIV transmission accounting for 98.9% of total cases in the adult population in Barbados.

The virus passes more easily from a man to a woman. Small tears can be present in the vagina, which is a larger contact surface than the tip of the penis. As infected semen is deposited in the vagina it is easily absorbed.

Anal sex is dangerous because the thin, anal mucous lining is more easily torn.

Normal kissing carries no risk unless there is blood emanating from mouth sores.

STDs (Sexually Transmitted Diseases) make the transfer of the HIV virus much easier because of discharge and ulcers.

2) By BLOOD TRANSFER:

- Blood transfusion. Today all blood is tested before it is given. In Barbados, of 3,053 blood donors tested for HIV in 1993, 10 were positive. In 1994, 9 out of 2,830 and in 1995, 9 out of 2,824. Therefore, there is a very small risk of contamination in this way.

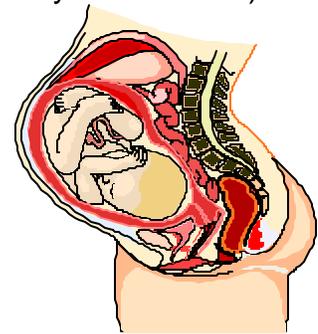


- Any blood that tests positive is of course not used.
- Sharing syringe needles, razors with someone who is HIV+, or using material contaminated by an infected person.
 - Obeah, Voodoo, or other sacrifice scarification (where the same blades have been used).
 - Multiple uses of the same blade in barbershops or hair salons can put people at risk. According to some studies this risk is very minimal.
 - Accidental needle stick injury with an infected needle. This risk, however, is very small.

3) By MOTHER TO BABY (VERTICAL TRANSMISSION):

An HIV+, pregnant woman can pass on the virus to the fetus (her baby in the womb):

- ▶ during the pregnancy; or
- ▶ during the delivery (most common); or
- ▶ the mother can contaminate the child by breast-feeding.



Approximately one third of the babies born from an HIV+ mother will become infected with the HIV virus. The number of infected babies can be further decreased if some basic precautionary measures are taken.

Prevention

AIDS IS A BEHAVIOURAL DISEASE. In order for any person to become infected, that person has to play an active role that will result in the transfer of infected bodily fluid from an infected person through an “open door,” an entry point of that person’s own body. Every person can **decide** to act in a responsible way that will be safe.



A - SEX:

- 1) **ABSTINENCE:** For an unmarried, young person, the best advice is to abstain from having sex until he/she gets married to a faithful, uninfected person.
- 2) **SAFE SEX – No RISK of GETTING HIV:** This is having sex with your partner in a formal relationship like in marriage. Both partners must be completely faithful. Having multiple, sexual partners is very dangerous behaviour.
- 3) **SAFER SEX:** The use of condoms offers some protection, but condom use does not eliminate entirely the risk of contracting HIV and acquiring AIDS. **Condoms do not offer 100% protection!** Mutual ABSTINENCE and FAITHFULNESS in a marital relationship do offer 100% protection against HIV/AIDS!

B - BLOOD:

- 1) All blood donors should be tested. Blood should be transfused only if absolutely necessary.
- 2) Syringe needles should NEVER be reused. And upon completion of use, they should be carefully discarded to prevent accidental pricks.
- 3) Razors, and other shaving blades should be used only by their owners.

Sexually transmitted diseases, including AIDS, cannot be cured by having sex with a virgin!

Behaviour Can Be Changed

Wrong behaviour is rooted in sin. Sin affects all human beings. *"For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" Romans 3:23.*



God has made provision through His Son, Jesus, so that every person can experience a totally changed lifestyle. *"The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" Romans 6:23.*

God loves us. *For God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved" John 3:16-17.*

Repentance is essential to a changed lifestyle. *"If My people who are called by my name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land" 2 Chronicles 7:14.*

In Jesus, life is radically different. He said, *"I have come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" John 10:10.*

"And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life" 1 John 5:11-12.