

MTCT, 30% of mothers with HIV pass on HIV to their babies. MTCT reduces the chances by 50%. So, even with MTCT prevention your child can still be infected. But giving birth to a child with HIV is no shame. You can love a child with HIV just as much as one without HIV and you should not feel that it is your fault that the child is positive. Seeing your child suffer with many illnesses might add to your stress. It is important to make sure that your partner will continue supporting you once you have a baby. Make sure you have a family member who is prepared to look after the baby in the event of you getting sick.

### **Are women responsible for HIV?**

In many traditions, women are wrongly blamed for STDs and HIV. However, men are often responsible for spreading STDs and HIV. Often it is men who refuse to use condoms or who have unprotected sex outside their steady relationships. Often it is men who force women to have sex even if they say no. If you got infected as a result of being raped, do everything possible to get the rapist prosecuted. If you contract HIV through consenting sex, try and accept the illness, start with a new outlook on life. Continue using condoms to make sure that you do not infect anybody else or get sexually transmitted infections. Find out about the best way to inform your partner and counsel him/her so that he/she does not infect anybody else.

### **I am gay, I have never had sex with a woman, how can I have HIV?**

Yes, gay men also get HIV. In fact, men having unprotected sex with men run a higher risk of being infected with HIV as opposed to men having unprotected sex with women. Unprotected anal sex is particularly risky as the anus often tears slightly during sex. This can allow the HIV virus to enter the blood. However, using a condom with lubrication gives good protection.

### **Is it safe to have sex while I am menstruating?**

Some cultures disapprove of sex during menstruation. However, from a medical point of view there is no problem with that. Provided you use a condom it is perfectly safe. Sex during menstruation might even help a woman relax, might reduce her pains and speed up the menstruation.

### **HIV is transmitted by vaginal fluid, is it safe to have dry sex?**

No, this is not safe. Dry sex means having sex while the woman does not produce enough vaginal fluids. This means the woman is not aroused and has little chance of enjoying the sex. Her vaginal membrane can easily be injured and can get small tears. This makes it more likely that she can be infected with HIV. Most people would agree that wet sex is more fun than dry sex. That is why many couples use lubricants under and over the condom. Many couples also concentrate on long non-penetrative sex. This can include stroking, massaging, kissing, oral sex and mutual masturbation. This is often called foreplay, meaning that it



**It is possible for people with HIV to have children.  
Consider it carefully with your partner.**

comes before the real thing. However, this cuddling can be the real thing and is especially satisfying for some people, especially women.

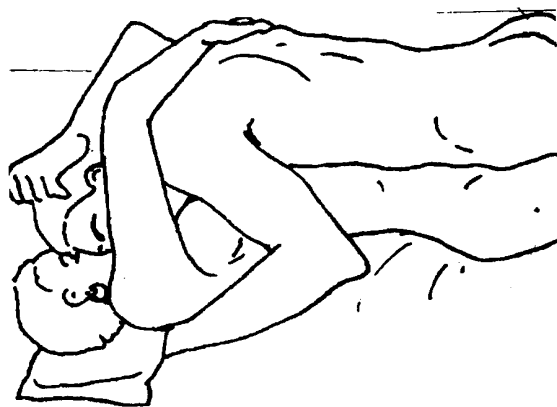
### **Is sex different for men and women?**



Yes. For most women sex is an emotional more than the physical experience. A woman usually takes more time to get an orgasm. Orgasms in women are usually not reached purely through physical pleasure, but also through an emotional state of feeling relaxed and loved. Men, on the other hand, can be aroused quickly and satisfied quickly and then fall asleep within minutes. Try and talk openly to your partner about what s/he likes. Be adventurous and experiment with new sexual positions and styles.

### **Have fun, but keep it safe.**

Condomise every time when having penetrative penetration.



## The syndromic approach to STDs

STDs are divided into four groups according to their symptoms. There are many germs that cause these symptoms. However, we are more successful in treating them if we do not identify the germ, but just treat for all the germs that might cause a specific symptom. This is called the syndromic approach. This approach also recommends treatment for your sexual partners even if they have no symptoms. The correct use of condoms can prevent all STDs.



### 1. Vaginal discharge or penile drop

A discharge is when a woman has fluid running from the vagina. It can be smelly or cause the urine to burn. It can also cause pain during sex. If not treated effectively the germs can spread to the womb. This can cause pains in the lower tummy. It can also make it difficult to fall pregnant. The same germs can cause drop in men. This is a messy fluid draining from the penis that makes it painful to pee. It takes a few days from infection to symptoms. Gonorrhoea, chlamydia or trichomonas are the germs that can cause vaginal discharge or penile drop.

#### Treatment

- ▣ **Ciprofloxacin** 1 tablet only;
- ▣ **Doxycycline** 1 tablet 2 times daily for 1 week;
- ▣ **Metronidazole** 2g on the first day.

Ciprofloxacin is expensive when bought privately. Many private doctors do not give Ciprofloxacin to save money. However, this can lead to unsuccessful treatment of Gonorrhoea.

### 2. Sores or ulcers that are not very painful

Ulcers and sores on the private parts take a few days from infection to symptoms. Treponema (syphilis) and haemophilus are the germs that cause such sores. If syphilis is not treated the germs enter the blood. It can later cause skin problems or brain problems. There is a test that can check for syphilis in the blood. It is recommended that you do this test yearly.

#### Treatment

- ▣ **Penicillin** injections weekly for 3 weeks;
- ▣ **Erythromycin** 2 tablets 4 times a day for one week.





### 3. Sores or blisters causing pain

Herpes is diagnosed if men notice bothersome blisters on the penis. In women it usually causes painful sores on the private parts. These sores can burn badly when urine comes onto them. Herpes is caused by a germ called Herpes Simplex Virus or HSV. The herpes virus can also cause cold sores on the lips. Once you are infected with this virus you stay infected for the rest of your life. The blisters or sores will appear regularly and disappear again after a few days. They reappear if you are stressed, the skin is irritated, or if the immune system is weak. The symptoms can recur even if you

start using condoms. You should explain to your partner and nurse that this is not a new infection.

In a person living with HIV, herpes is usually classified as HIV stage two. However, when the immune system is very weak the sores can be five centimetres big. If they stay for longer than one month the herpes is classified as stage four.

#### Treatment

- ❑ **Acyclovir** 400mg 3 times daily for 5 days.

This treatment quickly reduces the pain and helps the sores to heal. It is recommended in the government's treatment guidelines, yet it is not available in government clinics. Watch out that you are not wrongly given Penicillin injections and Erythromycin tablets.

### 4. Warts

Warts can start as small growths on the private parts. If not treated, they can grow bigger and look like a cauliflower. It takes a month to a year from infection to symptoms. Warts are caused by Human Pappiloma Virus or HPV.

#### Treatment

- ❑ **Podophyllin** painted on warts weekly for 3 weeks.
- ❑ If warts are larger than 1 cm an operation might be needed to remove them.
- ❑ Sometimes the warts get smelly. This is caused by bacteria on the warts. It should be treated with antiseptic washes and antibiotic tablets.
- ❑ In some women this HPV virus can cause **cancer of the womb**. Cancer of the womb can be prevented by doing a yearly **PAP smear**.



## Itching of the private parts

**Thrush** is diagnosed in women if they have itchy private parts with a whitish substance in the vagina. This is not an STD. It is caused by candida germs. All women have candida germs in the vagina. It is not a sexually acquired germ. However, in women with weak immune systems it grows too fast and causes symptoms.

## Treatment

- ❑ **Clotrimazole** or other vaginal anti-fungal creams or bullet-tablets.
- ❑ If the problem recurs **Fluconazole** tablets might be needed.

## Illnesses in other body parts but spread through sex

Some germs are spread during sex, but they do not cause illness of the private parts.

- ❑ The Hepatitis B virus can cause **liver disease with jaundice or liver cancer**. It can take months to years from infection to symptoms.
- ❑ A different herpes virus can cause **Kaposi's Sarcoma**, a cancer seen in the skin or mouth.
- ❑ The HIV virus can cause the weakening of the immune system and finally **AIDS**. It can take two to ten years from infection to symptoms. Initially HIV can only be seen by doing an HIV test.

## Treatment

For HIV treatment is according to the opportunistic infection, e.g. TB with TB treatment. HIV at an advanced stage is treated with antiretrovirals e.g. AZT, 3TC, Efavirenz or ddI, d4T and Nelfinavir or 3TC, d4T and Nevirapine.

## STDs help spread HIV



HIV positive people who have an STD are more likely to pass HIV to their partners. STDs increase the amount of HIV virus in sexual fluids. Make sure never to have sex without a condom. HIV negative people who have an STD have a very high risk of getting infected with HIV. STDs, especially herpes, damage the skin and membranes of the private parts. This makes it easier for the HIV virus to enter the blood of another person and infect him or her.





## Culture, STDs and HIV

- ❑ In some cultures women are blamed for STDs. This is wrong. Both sexual partners should be responsible for precautions. The best safeguard against STDs is to use condoms.
  - ❑ Women are more likely to get HIV, because the vagina has a very thin membrane through which the virus can pass into the blood. Also, during sex without a condom the semen stays inside the vagina for a long time.
  - ❑ In men who have not been circumcised the vaginal fluid can remain under the foreskin for some time. This increases the risk of infection.
- ❑ Men who have unprotected sex with men are more likely to transmit HIV as the anus gets small tears during penetration.
  - ❑ When circumcision is done traditionally, care should be taken that the cutting is done with a germ-free blade. HIV can easily be spread from one person to the next if the same blade is used for several people. It is also important not to have sex while the wound has not fully healed.



## Skin problems can cause emotional stress

People living with HIV are likely to get many different skin problems. Very few of them are dangerous. Most of them are classified as HIV stage two. Therefore, your doctor or nurse will often not take them very seriously. However, the person with the skin problem is usually very aware of the problem, because it is so visible. Skin problems can make you feel unattractive and damage your self-confidence. They can constantly remind you of your HIV status, since they usually last for a long time. Some people think others can see they have HIV, because of the skin problems. However, skin problems can also occur in people who do not have HIV. A huge help to overcome your skin problem is to accept your HIV status fully and to have a positive self-image.

## Painful one-sided rash: shingles

Shingles is a rash of blisters that occurs on one side of the body. It is usually the size of two hands, or, when on the face, the size of one hand. It starts off as an itch or burn, but can then become extremely painful. Shingles, if not treated properly, can get infected with bacteria. Smelly pus can then come out of the open wound. The infection can leave a bad scar similar to a burn-wound. The scar can pain for many years. Shingles on the forehead and the nose is likely to affect the eye. If not treated immediately it can cause blindness. Shingles is caused by a virus affecting the nerve of the skin. The virus is called herpes zoster.



## Treating shingles

The treatment guidelines of the Department of Health says shingles should be treated with Aciclovir, Famciclovir or Valaciclovir. However, none of these three medicines are available at government clinics. Treatment with one of these medications has to start within the first three days of the shingles. Such early treatment can prevent all complications and reduce the pain significantly. Ask your doctor to give you a prescription and buy it at a private pharmacy. This will be expensive – more than R 100. We must put pressure on all clinics to make these crucial medicines available. The government can buy them in bulk, which will mean much cheaper prices. The clinic should give you Gentian Violet, Mercurochrome or Chlorhexidine to put on the rash. They do not treat the rash, but can prevent infection with other germs. You should also get Amitriptyline, Paracetamol and Ibuprofen for the pain. When the blisters are gone, but you still have a painful scar, Amitriptyline is the best medicine.

