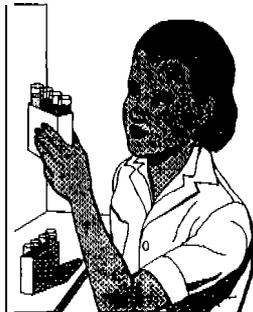




Just the Facts

22-002-0396

HIV/AIDS FACT SHEET



Definition and Terms

- **Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS)** - a disease in which the body's immune system breaks down.
- **Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)** - the virus that causes AIDS.
- **HIV-Related Illness** - conditions such as thrush and night 'sweats' that HIV-infected people develop as their immune systems become impaired. Other examples are recurrent pneumonia and invasive cervical cancer.
- **Opportunistic Infection** - illnesses that occur when the immune system breaks down. The most common are *Pneumocystis carinii pneumonia*, *Cytomegalovirus (CMV)*, and *Mycobacterium avium complex (MAC)*.

Transmission of HIV

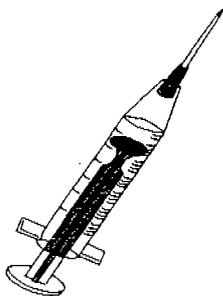
HIV lives in body fluids: blood, semen, vaginal fluid, and breast milk. Infection occurs when a body fluid containing HIV enters the body of an uninfected person. The four main ways that HIV is transmitted are *sexual intercourse, sharing needles* (drug, vitamin, steroid, tattoo, or any other type that pierces the skin) *with an infected person, transfusion of infected blood or blood products, and being born to or ingesting breast milk from an infected woman.* All forms of sexual intercourse (vaginal, anal, and oral) can transmit HIV from a man to a woman, from a woman to a man, or from a man to a man. Heterosexual transmission is increasing more rapidly than any other form of transmission.

HIV **cannot** be transmitted by everyday contact with people at home, work, or school; by social kissing or hugging; from coughing or sneezing; from using phones, toilets, or utensils; or **from** donating blood.

Diagnosis

HIV is diagnosed by a blood test. The window period from exposure to the virus to becoming HIV-positive probably ranges **from** three weeks to six months. Persons can transmit the virus before the test for HIV is positive. AIDS is diagnosed by the appearance of an HIV-related illness or an opportunistic infection.

- ◆ HIV Awareness
- ◆ Transmission Awareness
- ◆ Prevention Awareness



Developing AIDS

HIV can remain in the body for ten years or longer without causing symptoms of infection. People who do not have symptoms look and feel healthy and may not know that they are HIV-positive. However, HIV infection almost always leads to AIDS (95 percent of the time), and AIDS almost always leads to death (99 percent of the time). Once the virus starts to break down the immune system, the person is said to have AIDS and will develop HIV-related illnesses and/or opportunistic infections.

AIDS is the ninth leading cause of death in the United States and the third leading cause among individuals aged 25 to 44 years. Over one million people in the United States are infected with HIV. Over 311,000 people have died from AIDS. (See Reference 1.) There is no cure for AIDS; however, better drugs for suppressing the spread of the virus in the body and more effective treatments for opportunistic infections are being developed.

Army Policy Regarding HIV and AIDS

Since 1985, the Army has conducted an ongoing program of screening candidates as well as active and reserve soldiers for HIV. According to Army Regulation (AR) 600-1 10, (see Reference 2), all active-duty soldiers will be routinely tested at least biennially. Soldiers are tested initially with the enzyme linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA) test which is followed by the immunoelectrophoresis (Western Blot) test if the initial test is positive.

The regulation states that HIV-infected active-duty soldiers, including Active Guard/Reserve, will be permanently limited to duty within the continental United States. All active duty and reserve soldiers scheduled for overseas deployments or temporary duty exceeding 179 days must be tested for HIV infection within the six months prior to departure date.

Preventing Infection

HIV infection is *tofu&preventable by:*

- Abstaining from sexual intercourse.
- Being in a long-term monogamous relationship (both partners are faithful).
- Not using injectable drugs.

The risk of HIV infection can be *reduced by:*

- Using latex condoms for *any* form of sexual intercourse (oral, anal, or vaginal).
- Restricting sexual expression to activities other than intercourse.
- Making sure friends and family have accurate information about HIV exposure.

References

1. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, November 24, 1995/Vol. 44/No. 46, Center for Disease Control.
2. AR 600-110, *Identification, Surveillance, and Administration of Personnel Infected with Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)*, 22 April 1994.