

consider this HIV, AIDS & safe sex

VAC/GMHC

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www.vicaids.asn.au



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introduction

This passbook has been prepared for ALL gay men to provide essential information about HIV, AIDS and safe sex in Australia.

By knowing how HIV is passed on you are better able to make choices about how to best reduce your risk of getting or passing on the virus. HIV can be passed on through sex. For information about other Sexually Transmissible Infections (STIs) just flip this passbook over and read from the other side.

If you have serious concerns about HIV or AIDS see your doctor or a counsellor. There are tests to tell you whether or not you have the virus. If you do have HIV there are a range of treatment and support options available. The contact list (see pages 22–23) will tell you where you can get more information about these.

Whether you *think* you've heard it all before, or there are things you're not sure about, this booklet is for you. Further updated information is available online at www.vicaids.asn.au or by calling the VAC/GMHC for our FactSheets (see pages 22–23 for Contact Details).

what is HIV?

The Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is a virus that attacks the immune system—the body's defence against illnesses. People with HIV are said to be HIV Positive (HIV+). It is possible for people to have HIV for many years and remain well. There are many treatments for HIV, but no cure. Once a person is diagnosed with HIV, they will have HIV for the rest of their life.

what is AIDS?

A person is said to have Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) when they have an illness or condition as a result of HIV weakening their immune system. There are a range of these illnesses and conditions and these are called Opportunistic Infections. These are caused by viruses and bacteria that most of us already have and that are usually controlled by a strong immune system.

HIV weakens the immune system by targeting a cell called a CD4 cell (also called T4 or 'helper' cells). The CD4 cells are a vital part of the body's immune system. The CD4 cells tell other cells of the immune system what to do when an invading organism, germ or cancer is found in the body. As HIV kills off the CD4 cells the body is less able to fight off the opportunistic infections.

getting HIV

how do you get HIV?
you CAN get HIV from...

you CANNOT get HIV from...

Having unsafe sex

This is anal or vaginal sex—fucking or being fucked—without using condoms and a water-based lubricant;

Sharing injecting equipment

Casual contact

including sharing drinking glasses, cutlery, etc.;

Body contact

including hugging, cuddling, massaging or kissing;

Caring for someone with HIV;

Having safe sex

how is HIV passed on?

how does a person know if they have HIV?

Only cum (including pre-cum), blood and vaginal fluids can pass on the virus.

For a person to be infected three things have to happen:

→ There has to be HIV in the cum, blood or vaginal fluid

→ **AND**

→ There has to be enough HIV to cause infection

AND

→ It has to get into another person's bloodstream.

Without these three things HIV CANNOT be passed on.

A person's HIV status is either Positive or Negative. The only way for a person to tell if they have HIV is by having a test for the HIV antibodies (see HIV antibody test on page 13). A Positive result means a person has HIV and is said to be HIV Positive or HIV+.

It is impossible to be completely sure whether a casual partner has HIV or not

how does cum, blood or vaginal fluids get into the bloodstream?

HIV+ or HIV-?

The two main ways that cum, blood or vaginal fluids can enter your body are:

- Through UNSAFE SEX: anal or vaginal sex—fucking or being fucked—without using a condom and a water-based lubricant;
- Through sharing injecting equipment.

If you know for certain that you and your sex partner do not have HIV or other STIs then there is no way that they can be passed on. But be real. It is impossible to be completely sure that a casual partner is HIV Negative. If you're not absolutely sure, choose to have sex in a way that reduces the risk of getting or passing on HIV or other STIs (i.e. Use a condom with water base lubricant when you have sex). If you need to know your HIV status, consider having a HIV antibody test or a sexual health check up. If you and your partner are both HIV Positive then HIV cannot be transmitted, but other STIs maybe.

viral load

Viral load is the actual amount or measurement of HIV in a person's blood. When a person is first infected with HIV, the amount of virus in their body skyrockets as their immune system mounts a response to the infection. Because of the massive amounts of virus in their body, this is the time when HIV transmission is most possible. It may also be more possible at this time because a person may still test HIV Negative, and therefore they mistakenly think they pose NO risk to others (see HIV Antibody Test page 13). **Someone who believes that they are HIV Negative may in fact pose a much higher risk of transmission.**

Viral load fluctuates throughout the course of infection and varies among different people. It is highest when a person is first infected and also if their immune system is eventually overwhelmed by HIV (generally the stage we know as AIDS).

condom usage

Using condoms with a water-based lubricant is the best way to reduce your risk of getting or passing on HIV and other STIs. Condoms prevent transmission of HIV.

Condom use may not come easily! Try experimenting with condoms before using them for sex. Find a brand and size that suits you. Get used to how they feel. Wank with them on.

- Put the condom on before you start to fuck, not just before you're about to cum;
- Unwrap carefully so as not to tear the condom and try not to use your teeth to open the packet;
- Make sure it is the right way round;

- Squeeze the air out of the tip of the condom (by holding it between two fingers) as you roll it on. This makes room for cum, minimising the risk of breakages;
- Roll the condom right down to the base of the cock;
- Use **water-based** lube such as KY jelly, Wet Stuff, Glyde or Lubafax on the condom and in the arse. Oil-based lubes (like Vaseline, Baby Oil, hand creams, Intensive Care etc) weaken the latex of the condom and can cause it to break. Saliva (spit) should NOT be used as a lubricant;
- Stop occasionally to relubricate and check the condom;
- When you pull out, hold onto the base of the condom so it doesn't slip off;
- Never reuse a condom. Dispose of carefully.

TIP—Do not use someone else's cum as a lubricant. It can enter the tip of the cock, or through small abrasions. This might allow HIV to be passed into the bloodstream.

condom tips

- Ultra-thin condoms are made for vaginal sex. Anal sex puts more stress on condoms;
- Avoid using out-of-date condoms—check the use by date;
- Be sure to buy condoms made to Australian standards—check the outside of the pack;
- Never leave condoms out in the sun, or near any sharp objects that might damage them, or in the glove box of your car or wallet for prolonged periods;
- Don't store your condoms near extreme heat or cold.

condom size

A certain number of breakages occur because of people wearing the wrong size condom. 'Too big' or 'too small' can lead to tearing. The size that really matters is diameter, not length.

kissing and cuddling wanking

At least one condom brand (Glyde) produces condoms that comes in three sizes, based on the diameter of the unrolled condoms. The smallest size is 49mm; 'average' sized condom is 53mm; and the next size up is 56mm across.

kissing and cuddling

HIV cannot be spread by spit (saliva). There is no evidence that kissing or cuddling lead to HIV being passed on.

wanking

HIV is NOT passed on by:

- Wanking, yourself or someone else;
- Massage, body stroking and licking;
- Cumming on somebody.

oral sex

TIP—Getting cum in the mouth may increase the small risk associated with oral sex.

sucking or being sucked

HIV is NOT passed on *from* the mouth to someone else's cock. There are a small number of recorded cases of people getting HIV from sucking someone's cock and taking cum into their mouth. In almost all of these cases the person had herpes sores, wounds, cuts or infections in their mouth. It isn't easy for HIV to enter the bloodstream via the mouth or throat when sucking.

TIP—You can use a dental dam or clear sheets of plastic food wrap (not microwave safe) as protection.

TIP—Get vaccinated for Hep A (which can be passed on by rimming).

rimming—licking out

Rimming, licking another person's arse, does NOT pass on HIV. However, Hep A (see 'hepatitis' in STI section) and various bowel infections are easily passed on this way.

anal sex

Many guys think that because they're the one doing the fucking (the Top), HIV can't enter their body—but it can.

fucking—being fucked passive fucking—bottom

Being fucked up your arse by another guy's cock without a condom is the most likely way of getting HIV, if you're not 100% certain of your partner's HIV status or if you know your sex partner is HIV+. Cum that carries HIV can easily cause infection through the lining of the arse and through small cuts or abrasions that can occur during fucking. Having your sex partner use a condom with a water-based lubricant is the best way to reduce the risk of getting or passing on HIV and other STIs (see Condoms on page 8).

fucking active fucking—top

Fucking another guy up the arse without a condom on your cock is another way of getting HIV, if you're not 100% certain of your partner's HIV status or if you know your sex partner is HIV+. Many guys think that because they're the one doing the fucking (the Top), HIV can't enter their body—but it can. HIV can enter the cock through the opening at the tip (the *meatus*) or through cuts or scratches on the cock. Reduce the risk of getting or passing on HIV and other STIs by using a condom and water-based lubricant. By being the active partner (the Top) you can pick up HIV infection from others.

making anal sex safer

Always use a latex condom and plenty of water-based lube (like K-Y, Wet Stuff, or Glyde). Never use oil-based lubricants (like Baby Oil, Vaseline or Crisco). They can weaken the condom, causing it to break. If you use sex toys, (dildos, butt plugs) putting a latex condom on them and replacing the condom with a new one for each partner will help reduce risk. Or, be sure to wash them thoroughly with soap and hot water before sharing. Sex toys that are shared and not cleaned can transmit STIs.

risk reduction

risk assessment strategies

Some people believe that the risk of contracting HIV being passed on can be reduced by the position they have sex in. For example, a guy who doesn't have HIV and likes to fuck (being

the Top), believing that there is less risk than being fucked (being the Bottom). **Less risk does not mean no risk.** Withdrawal (pulling out before cumming) does not protect you from getting or passing on HIV. If you're a HIV Positive guy who likes to fuck (Top) you may still pass on HIV to a Negative guy even if you don't cum. Some of your pre-cum can enter the other guy's arse and HIV is found in pre-cum. If you're a HIV Positive guy who likes to get fucked (Bottom), again you may still pass on HIV to a Negative guy. Blood from your arse can still get into the hole at the tip of the other guys cock (the *meatus*), or get into tiny cuts or scratches on his cock. The choice about having protected or unprotected sex lies with **both** partners

HIV antibody test

If you think that you may have HIV, or want to be sure that you don't, you can have a test that detects antibodies to the virus. This is NOT a test for AIDS or for HIV itself, only for the HIV antibodies. Antibodies are part of the body's natural defence system, which show up when germs or viruses enter the body. HIV antibodies show up in a test between 2 and 8 weeks from when HIV was passed on. This is called the "**window period**".

deciding on having a test

It is important to have counselling before AND after the test; this is called pre and post test counselling. In fact, in Victoria the law requires this. This has to happen in person.

Pre test counselling will help you to decide whether or not you need to have it. The doctor, counsellor or nurse will talk to you about:

- What the test is for;
- What it would mean if the test was either Positive or Negative;
- Safe sex and safe injecting;
- How to get support during the waiting time.

Remember, the decision about whether to have a test or not is yours.

getting support

if you test HIV+

Before taking a test, you might want to think about telling one or two friends so that you have some support. Think about who you might tell—it's a good idea NOT to tell everyone you know, otherwise they all might want to know the result. When you do tell people that you are taking the test, or the test results, be very clear about how **confidential** you want that kept. You might not want them to tell other people. Some people find talking to a trained counsellor helpful while they are thinking about issues around HIV. VAC/GMHC offers a professional, confidential counselling service (See pages 22–23 for telephone number).

when you get your results

By law, these can only be given to you in person and accompanied by post-test counselling.

If you test HIV+ the doctor, counsellor or nurse can help you consider the following issues:

- Coping with the result;
 - The effect on family and friends;
 - Thinking about who to tell;
 - Possible discrimination by employers, doctors, dentists or even other gay men; and
 - What support you can access.
- What treatment options are available to you.

You may also be asked to help contact your past and present sex partners. Someone will be available to help you do this confidentially. Discrimination in housing, employment, insurance, finance and travel are mostly illegal. You might also be able to take legal action if someone tells someone else you're HIV+ without your permission.

if you test HIV Negative

staying healthy if you are HIV+

Regular monitoring of your health can suggest treatment options which can slow the progress of HIV in your body, preventing illness. It provides you with the option of making informed choices and planning ahead—feeling in control. Knowing you're HIV+ can help you make choices to avoid other risks to your health, such as STIs. **Getting tested is also a good opportunity to get tested for other STIs and to get vaccinated against Hep A and Hep B** (see *STIs section*).

If you test HIV Negative the doctor, counsellor or nurse can help you consider the following issues:

- Why you thought you may have been HIV Positive;
- What you are going to do to stay Negative from now on.

some good reasons to get tested

You might be having a test as part of an agreement with a partner (see **Fucking without condoms** on pages 16–18). You might just want to stop worrying about if you have the virus or not. Some people make incorrect assumptions about their HIV status

if you are in a sexual relationship and you want to fuck without condoms, then there are some steps to take together

fucking without condoms

when you get your results

Using condoms remains the safest way of having anal sex, but if you are in a sexual relationship and you want to fuck without condoms, then there are some steps to take together:

→ **talk about it**

The first step towards fucking without condoms is talking, and it is the talking that remains critical throughout. Some couples find talking easy. Others may need to meet with a counsellor or support person. Either way, be honest with each other. Talk about your desires and fears. Discuss all the issues. What happens if one of you gets a HIV Positive test result and the other is HIV Negative?

What if you are both HIV Positive? These are important issues and they are discussed elsewhere in this booklet.

→ **both get tested**

Be completely honest about your test results or agree to get tested and collect the results together. Be prepared that you, your partner or both of you might test HIV Positive. Counselling and support is always available through VAC/GMHC. Even if your tests are HIV Negative, keep using condoms when you fuck. Then...

→ **get tested again**

8 weeks later, get tested again. It can take that long for the HIV antibodies to show. If both of you are HIV negative, then...

→ **trust each other to tell**

Reach a clear agreement about sex inside and outside the relationship. Possible agreements include: (a) no condoms together; (b) no anal sex outside the relationship; (c) all anal sex outside the relationship is with a condom and lube; or (d) no sex outside the relationship. Recognise that people don't always stick to agreements, and that accidents can happen. If a slip-up occurs, it doesn't have to mean the end of the relationship. It does mean that you will both have to go back to using condoms again. Don't punish each other for telling the truth. Agree to start the process again— together.

if one of you is HIV Positive and the other is HIV Negative

It doesn't have to mean the end of the relationship, but it does mean that you should be using condoms. Fucking without condoms between an HIV Positive and an HIV Negative person is very risky sex. Remember both the person being fucked (the Bottom) and the person doing the fucking (the Top) can pass on HIV to each other. Talk honestly and openly to each other. Counselling and support is always available through VAC/GMHC. Ask for a copy of our 'Opposites Attract' booklet, a guide for HIV Negative partners of HIV Positive men.

Many gay men have become HIV+ because they mistakenly believed their partner was HIV Negative, and fucked without condoms.

if both of you are HIV Positive

The choice to fuck without condoms is yours. Some HIV Positive couples always have protected sex. Some don't. Remember if you choose to fuck without condoms, you risk coming into contact with sexually transmitted infections and other infections that may work with HIV to further damage your immune system. Talk about what's right for you and your relationship.

a word of caution

Some gay men believe that fucking without condoms is a way that you can demonstrate trust and intimacy in a relationship. Others have started fucking without condoms and then talked about getting tested.

Many gay men have seroconverted because one or both mistakenly believed that they or their partner, are HIV Negative. Some people find it difficult to talk about it when they slip up and have unprotected sex outside of the relationship. There is no shortcut to this process. The only steps to follow that can be guaranteed for people of the same **known** HIV status so that you can fuck without condoms are as listed on the previous pages.

Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (P.E.P.)

Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (P.E.P.) is a treatment that you can take if you think you have been exposed to HIV.

If you've done one or more of the following:

- if you had anal or vaginal sex without condoms,
- or, if you shared needles with someone who is HIV Positive—or with someone whose HIV status you're unsure of—you might have been exposed to HIV.

P.E.P. may be able to stop HIV infection, but you have to act fast. Ideally P.E.P. should be taken as soon as possible—but no more than 72 hours after the possible exposure.

During business hours P.E.P. is available from the Infectious Diseases Clinics of the Alfred and Royal Melbourne hospitals and after hours from the Accident and Emergency Department of the Alfred Hospital (See pages 22–23 for Contact Details). They will give you information and counselling about the course and effects of the treatment. **Remember, the longer the delay, the less likely P.E.P. is to be successful.**

drugs and alcohol

Using drugs or alcohol can affect the choices you make about sex and how you tell your partner what you want.

It's a good idea to make the choice to be prepared for safe sex before using drugs or alcohol. Making sure that you've always got condoms and water-based lubricant or clean fits with you can make it easier to stick to your decisions about what you want to do.

party drugs

Research has suggested that gay men and lesbians have a relatively higher level of alcohol and drug consumption than other people do. Reasons for drinking and taking drugs might be everything from a desire to feel relaxed, uninhibited and fabulous, through to escaping from feelings of

being stressed or oppressed. Some people use drugs & alcohol to have a good time; which often also means having sex. Alcohol and drug taking may contribute to sexual risk taking. It may interfere with your usual decision-making processes. Being 'out of it' could provide an excuse for risky behaviours. If you're HIV Positive and on treatments, another concern is that some drugs interact badly with some treatments. Reactions range from reducing the effectiveness of the drugs to increasing the risk of overdose.

TIP—Be blood aware and dispose of your fits safely. Free injecting equipment is available from VAC/GMHC at 6 Claremont Street, South Yarra.

For information on Mobile exchanges in Melbourne call Directline on (03) 9416 1818 or 1800 136 385.

shooting up

If you inject drugs, remember that each person should use new clean needles and equipment every time. Do not share needles, swabs, spoons, filters or tourniquets. Bleach cleaning your fits is a last resort and is no guarantee against blood-borne viruses such as HIV and Hep C.

vaginal sex

The virus is found in both cum and vaginal fluid, and can be passed on during vaginal sex. If you're having sex with a woman, use a condom with a water-based lube when fucking. HIV is unlikely to be passed on during oral sex if you are going down on a woman, although the risk increases if there is any menstrual blood. If there are cuts or sores in your mouth, a dental dam or sheets of clear non-microwaveable food wrap can be used to protect against HIV being passed on.

contact details

VAC/GMHC

→ 6 Claremont Street
South Yarra, 3141
*Counselling Services, Health
Promotion Team, Condom &
Lube sales*
Phone—9865 6700
Fax—9826 2700
Freecall—1800 134 840
TTY—9827 3733

Positive Living Centre

*HIV Services, David Williams
Fund, Complementary Thera-
pies, HIV+ Peer Support.*
→ 31-51 Commercial Road
Prahran 3181
Phone—9863 0444
Fax—9820 3166
Freecall—1800 622 795

The Centre Clinics

*General Practice medical clinic
with STIs information, testing
and counselling*
→ **Centre Clinic St Kilda**
Rear 77 Fitzroy Street
St Kilda 3182
Phone—9525 5866
Fax—9525 3673
→ **Centre Clinic Northcote**
42 Separation Street
Northcote 3070
Phone—9481 7155
Fax—9482 3690

Our Website address is:

www.vicaids.asn.au

*It contains links to more in-depth
and updated information on
many of the topics in this booklet
as well as links to other compre-
hensive sites.*

PLWHA Vic Inc (People Living with HIV/AIDS Victoria)

*Assists PLWHA's through infor-
mation, advice, advocacy, sup-
port and representation.
Newsletters, forums, Speakers
Bureau, Treatments Action
Group, Emergency and
Distress fund.*

→ 6 Claremont St
South Yarra 3141
Phone—9865 6772/6771
Fax—9804 7978

AIDS/Hep C LINE

*Information and advice on HIV/
AIDS, hepatitis C, safer sex and
sexual health.*
Phone—9347 6099
Freecall—1800 133 392
TTY—1800 032 665

Melbourne Sexual Health Centre

*STIs information, testing and
counselling*
Phone—9347 0244
Freecall—1800 032 017
TTY—9347 8619

Directline

*Needle and Syringe exchange
information and referral, alcohol
& drug information & counselling.*
Phone—9416 1818
Freecall—1800 136 385

The Alfred Hospital

→ Commercial Road, Prahran
Phone—9276 2000

The Royal Melbourne Hospital

→ Grattan Street, Parkville
Phone—9342 7000