

NEW JERSEY AIDS/HIV/STD HOTLINE

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PRESS RELEASE

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Tackling Myths About HIV Transmission

Many people continue to express concerns about how HIV is transmitted. At least one of the following must be present for HIV transmission to occur:

*HIV must be present in a person to be transmitted to another. An uninfected person cannot transmit HIV.

*HIV must be present in sufficient amounts to cause infection. Different body fluids contain varying amounts of viral material. The potentially infectious body fluids are blood, semen, vaginal secretions, and breast milk.

*HIV must get into the right place, the blood stream. Most commonly, HIV gets into the blood stream during unprotected sex and through the sharing of needles. Less commonly, it occurs during blood transfusions and from a pregnant infected woman to the baby she is carrying.

MYTH: *HIV/AIDS is transmitted by biting or bloodsucking insects.*

TRUTH: Some diseases can be transmitted by mosquitoes, fleas and ticks, however HIV/AIDS is **NOT** one of them. Scientists studied how an insect bites and found that it does not inject its own or a previous person's blood into a new person it is biting. It injects saliva. Some viruses, like yellow fever and malaria, are transmitted by the saliva of certain mosquitoes. HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, **CANNOT** reproduce in insects so it cannot survive.

MYTH: *A kiss on the cheek or sharing a glass with an HIV-infected person will transmit HIV.*

TRUTH: HIV is not casually transmitted. You **CANNOT** get HIV from kissing someone on the cheek, sharing their glass, or shaking their hand. Even if the person has the virus, unbroken skin serves as a barrier. It is recommended against engaging in open-mouth kissing with an infected person since this type of kissing has the theoretical potential for contact with blood. However, no cases of AIDS have been attributed to kissing.

MYTH: *Sharing exercise equipment or playing sports puts you at risk for HIV infection.*

TRUTH: Sweat or tears has never been shown to result in HIV transmission. The very low risk of transmission during sports participation would involve sports with direct body contact in which bleeding is expected to occur. There is **NO** risk of HIV transmission through sports activities where bleeding does not occur.

MYTH: *A woman with HIV infection can't have children without infecting them.*

TRUTH: Without any treatment, HIV-infected mothers can pass HIV to their newborns about 25% of the time. However, if mothers are aware of their HIV status and treated along with their infants, this chance of the infant becoming infected with HIV drops to 1 to 2 percent.

If you are still unsure about transmission or have general questions concerning HIV/AIDS or STDs call the hotline. **Remember Help is Just a Phone Call Away!** Call 1-800-624-2377. The AIDS/STD Hotline is available 24 hours per day, everyday!

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1-800-624-2377

Calls are free and confidential!