

TRANSMISSION

QUIZ PART TWO - ANSWERS

- 1. False.** AIDS stands for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. A syndrome is a collection of infections. You cannot catch a collection of infections. You therefore catch the virus - HIV -, which may lead to AIDS.
- 2/3. 3a,e, f, j.** HIV is transmitted through contact with blood, semen, breast milk and vaginal fluids.

Confusion often occurs because many body fluids have been shown to have HIV present, when tested in laboratory conditions but the virus is not present in high enough quantities for it to be transmitted from one person to another through any of the fluids (i.e. Saliva, faeces etc). There might be a risk in such fluids as saliva, vomit, faeces etc. if blood is present in sufficient quantity, (as it is the blood which can transmit the virus.). There is no risk of HIV transmission through urine.

- d. 14%** of HIV positive women transmit the virus to their unborn child assuming no preventive measures has been taken. These are the latest figures from the National Aids Manual. Years ago a pregnant woman with HIV was advised to terminate the pregnancy. Now there are national antenatal procedures and interventions for HIV, which were introduced in 2000. A baby is born with its mother's antibodies and will therefore show an HIV positive result when it first tests. By approximately 18 months old it will have developed its own antibodies and can be retested. This is a long time to wait. However, a new test, PCR test (Polymerase Chain Response) can now detect the virus itself in young babies. However, the test is expensive, can be wrong and is not routinely used. It tends to be used when a baby is failing to thrive in order to confirm a suspected HIV positive result.
- 5. False.** It is a false assumption that if you receive blood in the UK. that you are 100% safe. Because of the 'window period' it may be impossible to detect antibodies once the blood is tested by BTS. The window period is the time between when infection occurred and when antibodies are produced (usually 6 weeks though it can take up to 6 months). When blood is donated it is tested for antibodies - not virus - therefore if infection occurred within the previous 6 weeks it is unlikely that antibodies will be detected. However if you were in desperate need of a blood transfusion you would be more likely to die if you didn't receive it then you would be likely to contract HIV. The odds used to be less than 1 in 1,000,000 for UK blood transfusions. Many people now choose to store their own blood and some people take blood abroad with them.

6. An HIV test shows if there are any HIV antibodies in your blood. Antibodies usually appear in your blood a few weeks after you become infected with HIV. It is easier and cheaper to test for anti-bodies then to test for the actual virus. Clinics usually-recommend' that you wait for 3 months from the time of a possible risk before taking an antibody test to ensure that a negative result is truly negative. It is not a test *for* AIDS.
7. **False.** There might be a risk of HIV infection in giving first aid. The risk is dependent on what you do and the circumstances in which you give First Aid. It should be remembered that we bleed outwards and we would have to make a determined effort to get other people's blood into our system. However, there are other very serious blood borne viruses such as Hepatitis B ¹⁷¹⁷& C which are very virulent.
8. **False.** You can't catch HIV from insect bites anywhere. HIV is a human virus.
9. a. Injecting drug users can avoid HIV infection if they use clean needles.
b&c Washing the syringes out before use and reading Health Education Leaflets may contribute towards keeping you safer but will not mean you can avoid HIV infection. When a drug user injects, blood is drawn through the needle into the syringe (to ensure a vein has been hit). This is then directly injected into the blood stream and if shared will mean a mixing of bloods (as some will inevitably remain in the syringe). All injecting drug users are encouraged to use Needle Exchange Schemes.
10. **False.** It is a false assumption that if you only have one sexual partner you will not become HIV infected. Unless you and your partner are both virgins who have never shared injecting equipment there is no guarantee. You cannot tell by looking at someone if they are HIV positive. If they have the virus they may not be asymptomatic and may not even be aware that they have it. Always protect yourself.
11. **False.** Annual intercourse between gay men or heterosexuals carries same level of risk. It is not the person but the activity that carries the risk. Anal intercourse is more risky because the rectum tears easier than the vagina therefore making it easier for the virus to be absorbed.
12. **False.** Oral sex is less risky in terms of HIV transmission but it is definitely not risk free. The UK's Public Health Laboratory Service estimates that between 1% and 3% of HIV cases may be due to oral sex. Good oral health is important. If you have bleeding gums, sores or abrasions in your mouth then you are more likely to contact the virus. Condoms or dental dams can be used for protection and people are advised against brushing their teeth prior to oral sex as this may encourage gums to bleed. If semen is taken into the mouth it should be spat out quickly or swallowed because the acids in the stomach will inactivate the virus.

It is also important to remember that other sexually transmitted infections such as syphilis, herpes and gonorrhoea, can be easily transmitted through oral sex.

13. Who should you tell if you are HIV antibody positive?
- a. GP - some people do, depending on your relationship however if you tell your GP it is likely to be put in your record so question who in the surgery has access to that information. Also, if you apply for life or health insurance, mortgages etc. you will usually have to agree that the Company has access to your medical records and if that information has been recorded they will see it. You can request to see your medical records before they are sent. In terms of treatment most HIV positive cases are dealt with on an outpatient basis via a specialist service such as a GUM (your GP need not know).
 - b. Your employer - Some jobs that involve invasive procedures such as the job of an Obstetrician's are asked to comply with the department of health's duty of care procedure. Some companies might even request or test for HIV status. As HIV antibodies are not passed on through the type of normal social contact involved in the majority of jobs the question is what good it would do you to say. Hostility and discrimination does go on.
 - c. Your lover - a moral question. You would probably want to know if you caught it from them or vice versa.
 - d. Your insurance company. Insurance companies these days often do not ask direct questions about HIV and AIDS. They usually ask questions about whether you have received any recent medical treatment or had counselling or blood tests for sexually transmitted diseases. They can also ask see your medical records or speak to your GP. As they are not obliged to insure you they can turn you down if they know or think you belong to a high risk group or void your policy if they feel that the information you initially gave was false.
14. **d.** The greatest increase in HIV infections in this country is amongst heterosexuals. The numbers are highest amongst gay men but the greatest % increase is amongst heterosexuals - particularly women.
15. **d.** World wide, HIV is predominately spread by heterosexual intercourse.
16. **False.** Statistics reflect a picture of the known cases of HIV infection. Most reporting is on a voluntary basis and usually out of date. We have no idea of the numbers of HIV positive people who do not know they are infected or indeed those who may have died from HIV disease or AIDS (without a diagnosis).