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### Facts About Aids

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AIDS victims eventually develop are often related to other diseases or infections that attack them because of their inability to fight off infection.

These symptoms may include:

- extreme tiredness, sometimes combined with headache, dizziness or light-headedness;
- continued fever or night sweats;
- weight loss of more than 10 pounds which is not due to dieting or increased physical activity;
- swollen glands in the neck, armpits or groin;
- purple or discolored growths on the skin or the mucous membranes (inside the mouth, anus or nasal passages);
- heavy, continual dry cough that is not from smoking or that has lasted too long to be a cold or flu;
- continuing bouts of diarrhea;
- thrush, a thick whitish coating on the tongue or in the throat which may be accompanied by sore throat;
- unexplained bleeding from any body opening or from growths on the skin or mucous membranes; bruising more easily than usual;
- progressive shortness of breath.

### What should someone do who has these symptoms?

Each of the symptoms listed above can appear in illnesses that are not associated with AIDS. For example, everyone occasionally experiences tiredness, headaches, fevers and diarrhea. Anyone who has had one or more of the listed symptoms for a period of time and cannot identify another cause for the problem is advised to

contact a doctor or health clinic, and mention the concern about AIDS.

### Can AIDS be cured?

At the present time there is no known treatment that can restore the body's immune system to normal once it has been damaged by AIDS. Treatment can be given for the various diseases and infections that attack AIDS victims, and many of these conditions can be cured. However, since the immune system remains damaged, a person with AIDS will continue to be at risk for other serious infections and cancers.

### How can the risk of AIDS be reduced?

All information to date indicates that AIDS is spread by intimate sexual contact and by use of injectable drugs. Therefore, the risk of AIDS can be reduced by:

1. avoiding illicit drug use, especially IV drugs;
2. limiting the number of homosexual partners and avoiding sex with persons whose past history and health status are unknown.

### Where can I get more information?

If you have further questions about AIDS, contact your doctor, health unit personnel or local health department, or write to:

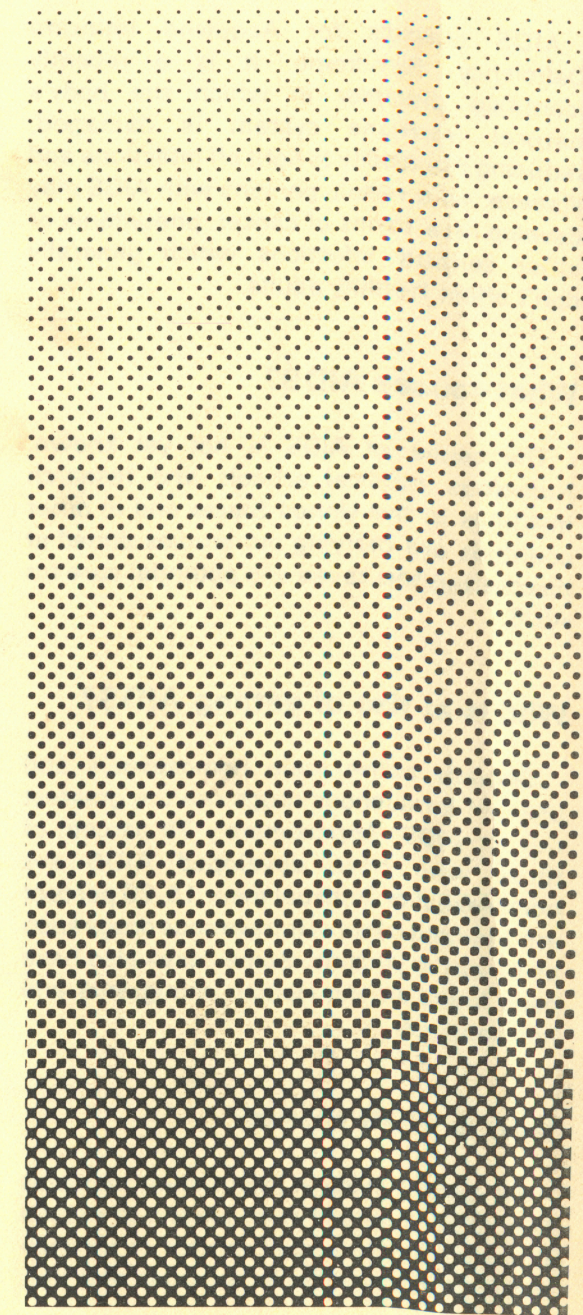
New York State Department of Health  
Corning Tower  
Empire State Plaza  
Albany, N.Y. 12237

**B. A. T. F. INC.**  
P. O. BOX 38  
BIDWELL STATION  
BUFFALO, NY 14222  
HOT LINE (716) 881-AIDS  
OFFICE (716) 886-1275



New York State  
Department of Health  
David Axelrod, M.D.  
Commissioner

# Facts About AIDS



## What is AIDS?

AIDS stands for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. It is a recently identified disorder in which the body's natural immune system is damaged, reducing the ability to fight off infections and disease. As a result, persons with AIDS may develop rare forms of cancer, pneumonia or other serious infections which generally don't affect healthy adults.

## What causes AIDS?

The cause of AIDS is not yet known. Numerous medical schools and research institutes in the United States and in other countries are carrying out studies aimed at discovering the cause and potential cure for AIDS.

## Who is at risk of getting AIDS?

Sexually active male homosexuals and users of intravenous drugs run the greatest risk for AIDS. Approximately 75 percent of those who have developed AIDS are homosexual or bisexual men; 15-20 percent are admitted users of intravenous drugs such as heroin or cocaine. Some cases also have been found among Haitian immigrants and hemophiliacs.

## How is AIDS spread?

All current medical information indicates that AIDS is spread from person to person through *intimate sexual contact* or through use of *shared needles* for injection of drugs.

There is no evidence that AIDS can be contracted through casual, nonsexual contact with a person who has AIDS.

There is *no evidence* that AIDS is spread by:

- sneezing, coughing or spitting;
- handshakes or other nonsexual physical contact;
- toilet seats, bathtubs or showers;
- utensils, dishes or linens used by an affected person;
- food prepared or served by an affected person;
- articles handled or worn by an affected person;
- being around an affected person, even on a daily basis over a long period of time.

## Why are homosexual men at high risk for AIDS?

Homosexual men often have intimate sexual contact with a large number of partners, thereby increasing the probability of coming into contact with affected individuals. Most male homosexuals who have developed AIDS are from big cities (New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Miami) with large gay communities, where sexual contact between strangers is readily available.

To reduce the risk of AIDS, physicians are advising their gay patients to limit their sexual activity to fewer partners, to avoid sexual contact with unknown persons and to select partners who are known to be in good health and who are also limiting the number of different partners with whom they have sexual relations.

## Why are IV drug users at higher risk for AIDS?

The higher risk for intravenous drug users is almost certainly due to sharing or reusing unclean needles for injecting the drugs. Blood from a person with AIDS can be injected into the blood stream of a healthy person if the same needle is used.

## Are prisoners at higher risk?

There is no evidence that being in prison increases the risk of developing AIDS. Nearly all of the inmates who have developed AIDS in New York State prisons had a previous history of intravenous drug use. Their risk for developing AIDS was therefore related to drug use, not to imprisonment. All information indicates that these inmates contracted AIDS prior to their imprisonment. The disease has an incubation period of one to two years, before symptoms begin to appear.

Prisoners who have not engaged in homosexual activity or intravenous drug use have no increased risk for developing AIDS.

## Is AIDS transmitted through blood transfusions?

Persons who need blood transfusions should not be unduly concerned about AIDS. While a few cases of AIDS have been reported among hemophiliacs and others who have received blood transfusions, these cases are still under study to determine if blood products were directly related to the disease.

More than 12 million units of blood and

blood components are administered to about 3 million people each year. There also are an estimated 15,000 hemophiliacs in the United States who receive frequent transfusions of blood products obtained from several thousand donors. Yet, only a few AIDS cases among hemophiliacs and persons who have received blood transfusions have been reported.

The New York State Council on Human Blood & Transfusion Services reviewed all of the facts available and concluded that there is no significant risk of contracting AIDS from blood transfusions.

## Why do hospitals take special precautions with AIDS patients?

By state law, all hospitals must carry out infection control procedures with any patient who has a potentially transmissible condition. Nurses and doctors caring for bedridden, seriously ill patients come in direct contact with blood samples, body fluids and excrement, used needles and other materials that can spread disease. Care must therefore be taken in handling these materials and disposing of them safely.

Special precautions also are taken with AIDS patients to protect them from infectious germs which may be present in a hospital. Doctors and nurses wear gowns and masks to guard against transmitting hospital germs to an AIDS patient whose damaged immune system cannot help fight against infections.

## What are the symptoms of AIDS?

In its early stages, immune deficiency may not cause any symptoms. The symptoms that