

Yorkshire MESMAC

Sexual Health Leaflet

HIV



www.mesmac.co.uk



This leaflet is designed for men who have sex with men. It provides you with information about HIV.



What is it?

HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is a virus that weakens the immune system. HIV may lead to AIDS (Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome).

How is HIV passed on?

- HIV is passed on sexually if you have sex without a condom with someone who is HIV positive. Not everyone knows their HIV status so you are unable to rely on what people tell you.
- There is enough HIV in blood, cum and pre-cum to cause infection. Spit, sweat and urine do not have enough HIV in them to infect anyone unless they contain blood.
- Vaginal and anal sex without a condom are high risk sexual activities for HIV. The riskiest type of sex is receiving anal sex, i.e. being a bottom.
- Oral sex is not high risk as long as you avoid brushing your teeth within an hour of oral sex (before and after) and if there are no cuts in your mouth, cold sores, mouth ulcers or gum disease.
- HIV can be passed on through sharing needles and other injecting equipment.
- If you have another sexually transmitted infection such as chlamydia or gonorrhoea, then this can increase the risk of being infected by HIV.

How do I know if I have HIV?

- Sometimes after 2-6 weeks of HIV infection, some people get a flu-like illness with a fever, swollen glands, sore throat or a rash on the body. This does not happen all the time and may be confused with a cold or flu.
- Getting tested for HIV is the only way of knowing what your HIV status is. It is recommended that all sexually active men who have sex with men test for HIV at least annually.
- Re-testing every 3 months is recommended for those with multiple partners and those engaging in or planning on having unprotected sex.
- HIV tests look for antibodies made against HIV, plus the HIV virus itself. Antibodies are your immune system's reaction to HIV infection.
- Tests from Yorkshire MESMAC should detect HIV after 12 weeks of possible exposure.
- Tests from the Sexual Health Centre will detect HIV after 4-12 weeks of possible exposure.
- Tests from both places are free, confidential and separate from your medical record.
- You can choose to have an HIV test at your GP but this will remain on your GP record. If the result is positive, your GP would be required to share this information with insurance and mortgage companies, plus employers, if requested to.
- Remember it's your decision to test; you should never feel pressurised into taking an HIV test.

How is HIV treated?

- If you are diagnosed with HIV, medication can be used to control your HIV infection and keep your immune system working.
- If diagnosed early enough, treatment is very effective and people have a good life expectancy; sometimes this can be the same as people without HIV.
- There is no cure for HIV.

How to reduce the risk of HIV transmission.

- If you have anal or vaginal sex then the best way to reduce the risk of HIV transmission is to use a condom and water or silicone based lube.
- Condoms put on properly are very reliable, however occasionally they can tear, split or roll off during sex. Using the correct size condom will help reduce this problem.
- Check during sex to spot any breakages and replace when needed. Using plenty of water or silicone based lube reduces the risk of the condom breaking. During anal sex, lube should be put inside the anus as well as onto the condom.
- Being the receptive partner/the bottom is the highest risk.

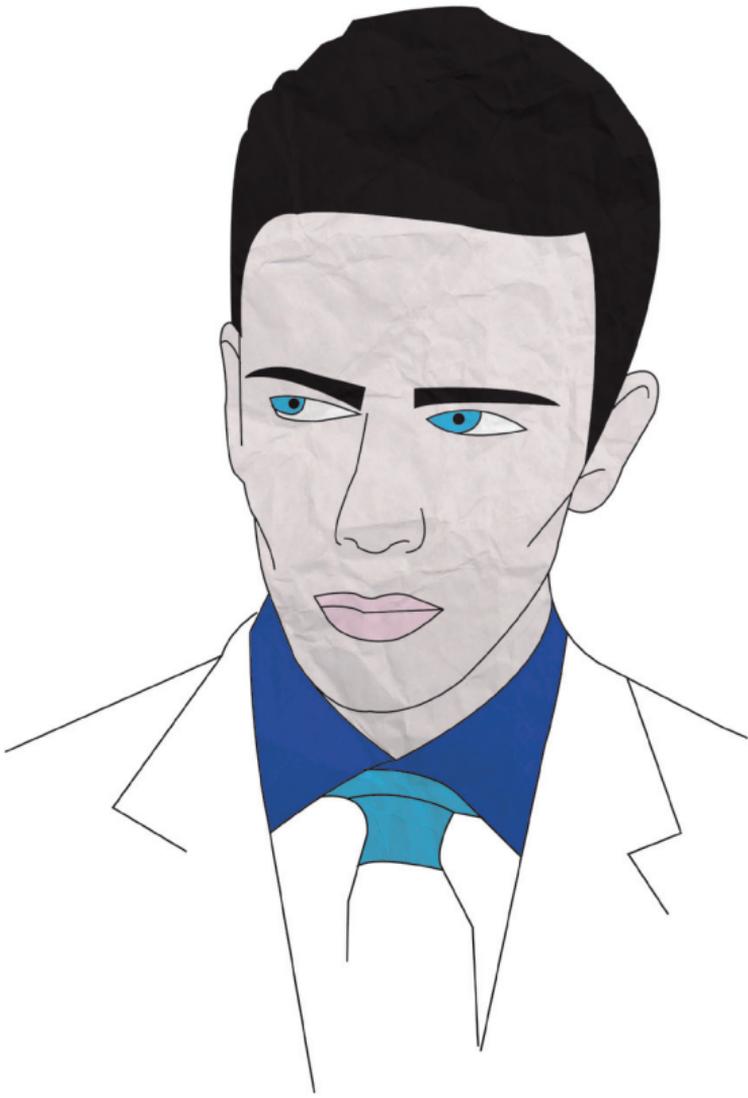
If the condom breaks?

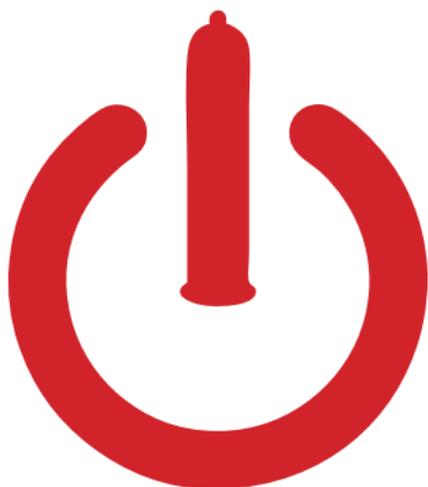
PEP (Post Exposure Prophylaxis) is a treatment that may prevent HIV infection after possible exposure to HIV.

- PEP must be taken within 72 hours of possible HIV exposure.
- The earlier you start PEP the more effective it is.
- PEP is available from Sexual Health Clinics and A&E departments.
- On occasion people do experience side effects.
- PEP is not a cure for HIV and although there is evidence that it reduces the risk of transmission, this is not guaranteed.

NHS (2012)
NICE (2011)

Produced: June 2014
Review Due: June 2017





Turn on to sexual health.

Yorkshire
MESMAC

Charity Number: 1040407



For more information, contact 0113 244 4209 or visit mesmac.co.uk