

HIV AIDS

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"We all have a role to play"

"1 virus, 9 genes, 15 proteins – 42 million diseased"

The HIV virus is the main cause for the HIV disease or HIV infection. A HIV+ person suffers from the HIV disease. The last phase of the HIV disease is AIDS, and it usually occurs 10 years after the infection. The person, suffering from AIDS, has a weakened immunity system and is susceptible to opportunistic infections, which are lethal.

Today we have the HAART therapy, which is characterized by use of cocktails of antiretroviral drugs. These drugs are free in Croatia and are attainable to all who are diseased. They significantly prolong the remained lifetime and raise the life quality.

The risk of spreading HIV is by:

- Vaginal and oral unprotected sexual contact
- Blood transfusion (every dose of blood in Croatia is tested for HIV, Hepatitis B and C, Syphilis)
- "French kissing" (the risk is pure theoretical, there have never been written cases of this method)
- Oral sex without secrete contact (except for pierced sexual organs)
- First aid (there is no risk if normal procedures are used)Risk of spreading HIV is absent during:
 - Normal social contact
 - Exploitation of things for the general purpose (phones, silverware…)
 - Sneezing, coughing, or any other tear or mucus skin contact
 - Masturbation, fondling, kissing or petting
 - Practitioner's and dentist's appointment, if normal hygiene procedure is maintained
 - Physiotherapy, massages, piercing if normal hygiene procedure is maintained
 - Insect stinging, animal bites
 - Care of HIV+ person while maintaining normal hygienic proceduresLatex condoms don't have pores 50 times the size of the HIV virus. Pores, through which water had passed, were found in only 0,3% of latex condoms on the market, but that pore is a 100 times smaller than the HIV virus.

Spread of HIV/AIDS is a global pandemic today, the plague of the 21st century and global killer – it can spread to all of us, regardless of our age, religion, nationality, gender or sexual orientation. The virus attacks the CD4 lymph glands, and when the concentration falls under 50/mm opportunistic diseases occur, and the diseased person dies from tuberculosis, meningitis, pneumonia or cancer.

The beginning of AIDS

The first case of AIDS occurred in 1981. in San Francisco, and after a year later it was proved as a new disease, on two sero-positive homosexuals in Los Angeles and New York City.

There are lots of theories about the beginning and spread of HIV. Here's one: the "zero patient" is responsible for the spread of HIV – he works as a stewardess in an airline company, which gave him the possibility to, totally unaware, infect more than 200 people throughout America and Europe.

There are two types of viruses – HIV1 (north hemisphere) and HIV2 (mainly in Africa). Today, using the HAART therapy, life with HIV is similar to a life with diabetes. The HIV disease has somehow become a chronic disease – AIDS id often delayed so much that the person could die at a pretty old age. In today's world, people who are diseased with HIV, in developed countries with enough drugs, can live up to the full life span!! The drugs are extremely toxic and they redistribute fat in the body, they also often cause anemia and require a strict food regime. However, except for those side effects, they are irreplaceable during HIV therapy. At the beginning, 10-15 types of drugs were used daily, but now with the development of medicine, only a few of them are used daily…

It's estimated that about 42 million people and children live with HIV/AIDS. The raised number of diseased people in Eastern Europe and Central Asia is alarming news. Eastern Europe is led by Russia with the countries from the former eastern block. This area has 137% more diseased people than it had last year. The tendency of growth is mainly in those countries that opened their borders for mass tourism.

The HIV disease isn't reserved for poor Africans, dirty prostitutes, "crack heads" or "fags". The virus does not choose – whether a newborn child or an elderly man – the disease always stays the same. These are some of the questions on which pupils from the gymnasium's 3rd year didn't have a clear opinion: do we need a law about AIDS, do we need public booklets of sero-positive persons, should we test risky social groups using force, should we ban certain jobs to sero-positive persons, is HIV spread by

kissing. The same pupils have shown a high level of tolerance and are aware of the danger that AIDS could cause, but they don't know how many sero-positive persons are in US nor is the virus persistent outside the human body.

The results show that there is unnecessary stigma towards persons who live with HIV, and it usually exists by disinformation – leading to direct discrimination and violation of human rights of the HIV+ persons. Stigma is a phenomenal social mechanism. It gives us the chance to demoralize people, take their dignity and gives us the right to violate other people's rights. It shouldn't exist, and that could only be achieved with tolerance, solidarity and elimination of fear from where it occurs.

HIV/AIDS must be “DESTIGMATIZED!”

The danger of HIV could only be reduced if educating young people about safety precautions. This is how children become conscious young people, introduced with the problems and complications, and educated to act responsibly and take correct actions. They would even know how to educate their own partners and friends, but most importantly – they would learn how not to get infected and how not to spread the disease. When in puberty, we all are interested in everything related to sexuality, so being well informed and educated about the correct behavior is essential for a healthy society today and in the future. It is generally familiar that young people usually discuss between themselves when trying to solve their problems, without their parent's or any other older person's interference, but they must know that the best information rarely comes from their friends. Have a talk with your surrounding about AIDS, but firstly with your parents. We believe that they have a lot to learn from you. Young people must be taught how to constantly work on their self-conscience and self-education.

Tuberculosis & HIV

HIV and Tuberculosis correlation – dual epidemic!

These diseases present the biggest global problem – HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. All these diseases usually attack young, work capable population on which the country's financial status depends. Every second a person gets diseased by tuberculosis and every 9 seconds by HIV (every 12 seconds, the diseased person is under the age of 25). HIV is responsible for 8000 deaths just in one day. HIV has left 16 million children without one or both parents. In the sub-Saharan part of Africa, the diseased person is sent for a HIV test if he previously has tuberculosis. Tuberculosis is the first sign (AIDS defining disease), and it is understandable because from 7 diseased, 5 are HIV+. If the person is infected with both diseases he only has about 5-6 weeks left. For treating tuberculosis, a few types of antibiotics are used together in treatment called DOTS. The entire treatment until the person is cured, which could last for months, costs only 10\$, however, in sub-Saharan countries this is too much money, because they have a big number of those who stop being work capable and they start to present a burden to the government. Of course, the problem of TB+HIV is not only present in Africa, but in all countries including the developed western countries.

Many countries that are located in the sub-Saharan region already have more than 40% of HIV+ people, and the average length of a human life is now half of what it has been, which causes new problems – political, psychological, social, financial, religious… Awful life conditions, lack of education, illiteracy, lack of social care, traditional and religious norms – usually affect women! The most common picture is a HIV+ young woman, diseased from her own husband, widow, left alone with her children, she hides her illness from society because she is afraid of reject and because there is a lack of medicine, she leaves her children to her oldest daughter to take care of them. Vicious circle.

A global program named “3 to 5” exists, from which a money transfer to the affected areas is expected, so that 3 million people would get the antiretroviral therapy until 2005.

Also, as a part of the Stop TB Partnership it is attempted, in 22 countries that have 70% of diseased with tuberculosis, to introduce the DOTS therapy.

The trick is in the choice, not in preference.

Two people are needed for sex, but the decision is common!

You have the choice, which can affect someone else's life!

There are things in life that don't have a compromise or excuse. This category includes activities that refer to personal responsibility to own and to someone else's life. By avoiding use of condoms, you surely risk your and someone else's health, including the health of your future children. Enough excuses – responsibility in the first place!

Complete protection from all risks related to sex is a total abstinence.

Proper and persistent use of condoms is the most efficient way to reduce the risks related with the spread of HIV/AIDS

and other sexually spread diseases. Sex with a condom isn't safe sex – but safer sex.

It is safer to play safe – either abstain or prevent!

By not using protection during sexual relations you raise the chance for unwilling pregnancy.

By not using protection you also risk from getting diseased with sexually spread diseases, from which a lot of them require longtime and complicated treatment as they often leave scars and other consequences, like infertility. Some of them are incurable – while HIV/AIDS have a fatal outcome.

Modern medicine doesn't have 100% efficient therapies for curing and eliminating the consequences of all sexually spread diseases.

Prevention is the best, simplest, cheapest and often only solution.

The biggest problem with sexually spread diseases with longtime and heavy consequences is that they stay unnoticed for quite a time, because they don't cause clear and specific symptoms.

It's extremely important that you and your partner test yourselves for HIV 3 months from the disputable unprotected sexual relation, and in the mean time, use condoms persistently.

Women should regularly visit gynecologists.

Not testing yourself has a lot of disadvantages – late revealing of the disease, longer and more complicated treatment, heavier and greater damage of the reproductive organs (ectopic pregnancy, cancer, infertility), diseasing of the partner you love, great loss of time and money while trying to revitalize your reproductive function, psycho-social problems… Persons with sexually spread diseases that cause damage to the mucous membrane are more susceptible to HIV infection. It is vital to start the treatment as early as possible and that is why testing yourself is of great importance.

A negative test – is just an affirmation of the past, not a sign for a secure future!

It is not easy but it is necessary to always use a condom – during every sexual contact:

- If you often change sexual partners, if trust and the past of the former partner are questionable (we can NEVER be to sure!) or if someone from this relationship had unprotected sexual contacts in the past.
- If you are certain that you or your partner have HIV, hepatitis B, syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia or tyhomonasy, abstain from any sexual contact or use condoms persistently. If there is visible damage of skin and the mucous membrane (for example, genital herpes, fungus or HPV infection), avoid mucous or skin contact with your partner's skin or mucous membrane. There are different stories, however, if your partner is saying that you have beautiful eyes, that he loves you, that he is loyal to you, that you are his first partner or that he has never had unprotected sexual contacts, and on top of all, that he doesn't have any symptoms of sexually spread diseases – and if both of you are a young couple, these arguments surely aren't good enough and they are a good excuse for not using protection, usually condoms.

It is safer to play safe

There are no risky social groups – there are only people whose behavior is risky! :

A huge risk is caused by these activities:

- Unprotected vaginal or anal sex
- No persistent use of condoms
- Often change of partners

A small risk is caused by:

- Sex with use of latex or polyurethane protection
- (Usually a condom or femidom)

A very small, or no risk at all is caused by:

- Kissing
- Petting
- Massaging

- Masturbation – personal or with a partner
Only persons who are aware of the risks and are prepared to suffer the consequences can be claimed as mature persons who are capable to decide about their own sexuality and sexual activities.

Oral genital stimulation is called oral SEX – by reason! Almost all risks related with sex are also related with oral sex. There are aromatized condoms – use them!

Why does the motto “we all have a role to play” exist?

AIDS had stopped being an epidemic, but a pandemic that is spreading throughout the entire world, and it is our duty that it doesn’t spread throughout Croatia – young people must give more attention to their and other people’s health, because the person who you love the most can be HIV+. Avoiding use of condoms is an exact sign of carelessness, not distrust. Using a condom is a sign that you care for your and your partner’s health – a true sign of attention and deep feelings in a relationship.

Think about the things you’ve just read – the world is in your hands, but for how long!