



The facts

HIV & AIDS

H-I-V stands for:

Human
Immunodeficiency
Virus

HIV is a virus that attacks the part of the body that fights diseases and protects us from getting sick (immune system). With a weak immune system, a person with HIV can easily catch other germs. Their body can't fight the germs and they can get very sick (this is called AIDS).

A-I-D-S stands for:

Acquired (something you get)
Immune
Deficiency (weak, no protection from diseases)
Syndrome (different symptoms, signs & illnesses)

AIDS is the different illnesses that someone might get because their immune system is very weak from HIV.

HIV cannot be cured – once someone has HIV it stays in their body for life.

Who can get HIV?

- ▶ **Anyone can get HIV**
- ▶ You can get HIV if the blood, semen or vaginal fluid of someone with HIV gets into your body.
- ▶ You can't tell by looking at someone whether or not they have HIV.
- ▶ A person with HIV may not know that they have it, but they can still pass it on.
- ▶ HIV can live in a person's body for years before they get sick, but they can still pass it on even if they seem well.

You can get HIV if:

- ▶ You have vaginal, or anal sex without a condom with someone who has HIV.
- ▶ You use the same needle for injections in a health clinic or hospital, or for injecting drugs, that's been used by someone who has HIV.
- ▶ You share the same needles, razors or other tools for tattooing, circumcision or skin piercing with someone who has HIV
- ▶ A mother with HIV can pass it on to her baby during pregnancy, childbirth or when breastfeeding

In the Pacific, most HIV infections happen through people having unsafe sex (sex without a condom).

Safe sex is any sexual activity where semen, vaginal fluid or blood does not pass from one person to another.

**BE WISE –
PRACTISE SAFE SEX**



How you can stay safe from getting or passing on HIV:

- ▶ If you are not having sex yet, then delay having sex.
- ▶ Do other less risky sex activities like rubbing, kissing, and masturbation where there is no sharing of semen, vaginal fluid or blood.
- ▶ If you have vaginal or anal sex – use a condom properly every time you have sex.
- ▶ Get tested for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs or STDs).
- ▶ Stick to only one sex partner who does not have HIV (the only way to know is to get tested).

How do you find out if you have HIV?

The only way to tell if someone has HIV is to have a blood test from a doctor or a nurse at a hospital or health clinic.

A blood test will tell you if you are HIV positive (you have HIV) or HIV negative (you don't have HIV).

If you get a blood test for HIV:

- ▶ You should give permission for your blood to be tested.
- ▶ You should be given counselling before you are tested and again when you are told the results of the test (if the test is HIV negative or HIV positive).
- ▶ You should be the only person who is told if the test is HIV negative or HIV positive.

You CANNOT get HIV from:

- ▶ mosquito bites
- ▶ using toilets
- ▶ shaking hands or kissing someone with HIV
- ▶ hugging someone with HIV
- ▶ working or playing with someone with HIV
- ▶ sharing cups, plates, spoons or food with someone with HIV
- ▶ sharing clothes with someone with HIV

Who can I talk to?

Get more information about HIV and AIDS from:

- ▶ A health worker, youth or community worker or peer educator
- ▶ Family planning/Family Health clinic or centre
- ▶ Your local health clinic or hospital

BE WISE – PRACTISE SAFE SEX

This pamphlet was adapted from the original developed by *Save the Children*, Solomon Islands.

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SPC
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