

# PROTECTING YOURSELF FROM HIV AND AIDS

Unit 5.7

## 5.7 JOURNAL

Your health teacher has stressed all semester about the importance of choosing good friends that share your same values.

How can your choice of friends help you avoid risky behaviors? If you were being pressured into doing something that you did not want to do (i.e. having sex, using drugs), how would you get yourself out of the situation?

## OBJECTIVES

- Identify three behaviors that can prevent the spread of HIV.
- Describe how a person gets tested for HIV.
- Describe the goal of HIV treatment.

## PREVENTING HIV INFECTION

- Currently there is no cure for HIV/AIDS
- You can protect yourself from HIV by:
  - Practice abstinence
  - Avoid drugs
  - Avoid contact with blood and body fluids
  - Sexual fidelity in marriage
  - Barrier protection

## PRACTICE ABSTINENCE

- Choosing sexual abstinence is the best way to avoid HIV/AIDS
- Even if you have been sexually active, you can choose abstinence
- It is much easier to be abstinent if you have friends who are abstinent

## AVOID DRUGS

- People who share contaminated needles to inject themselves with drugs are at a high risk for contracting HIV
- People who have sex with drug abusers are also at a high risk
- Using alcohol or other drugs can impair a person's judgment
  - More likely to engage in behaviors that place a person at risk

## AVOID CONTACT WITH BLOOD AND BODY FLUIDS

- Never share any personal items that may have blood or body fluids on them
  - Razors, syringes, piercing or tattoo needles
- Mothers who are HIV-positive should not breastfeed their babies
- Healthcare providers need to use universal precautions
  - Wearing gloves, gowns, masks; disposing of syringes and needles properly

## SEXUAL FIDELITY IN MARRIAGE

- Sexual fidelity is practiced when both partners agree to have sexual contact only with one another - to be monogamous
- If both partners are uninfected, sexual fidelity eliminates the risk of getting HIV or another STI

## BARRIER PROTECTION

- People can reduce their risk of HIV infection by using a condom during every sexual encounter
- However, condoms are not 100% effective in preventing the transmission of HIV

## TESTING FOR HIV

- A blood test is needed to determine if someone has been infected with HIV
- A person's blood is tested for antibodies to HIV
- If antibodies are detected, a second blood test is done to verify the results

## AN HIV-POSITIVE DIAGNOSIS

- If a person is diagnosed as infected with HIV, then he or she is said to be HIV-positive

### What should you do next?

1. First, notify all previous partners
2. Stop all high-risk behaviors that can spread HIV
3. Coping with this diagnosis may be difficult, so it is recommended to receive counseling

## REASONS FOR FOLLOW-UP TESTING

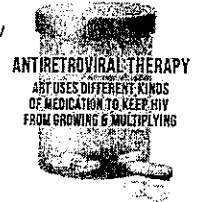
- If HIV infection is recent, a blood test may not be accurate
- Antibodies usually show up within 3 months after infection
- Avoid all high-risk behaviors and get tested again in 3 months if HIV infection is suspected

## THE GOAL OF TREATMENT FOR HIV/AIDS

- The main goal is to keep a person's immune system functioning as close to normal as possible
  - Keep person's viral\_load - number of virus particles circulating the body - as low as possible
  - Keep person's T cell count as high as possible

## COMBINATION DRUG THERAPY

- Treatment with HIV medicines is called ART - antiretroviral therapy
- People on ART take a combination of HIV medicines everyday
- ART can't cure HIV, but it can help people with HIV live longer, healthier lives
- HIV medicines also reduce the risk of HIV transmission



## LIVING WITH HIV

- People who are HIV-positive must take extra care to practice healthful behaviors
  - Eat healthy
  - Exercise
  - Get plenty of sleep
  - Regular visits to the doctor
  - Avoid others who are sick

## THE NEED FOR SUPPORT

- Support is needed for those infected with HIV
  - Counseling
  - Healthcare services
  - Financial assistance
- HIV-positive individuals should be treated with compassion

## A Lesson Plan from Guide to Implementing TAP: A Peer Education Program to Prevent HIV and STI

Leader's Resource for Four Corners: A Values Clarification Exercise Lesson Plan

**Pay special attention when youth express an unpopular or minority position.** Support the young person's willingness to stand up for those values by moving to stand beside the teen and praising the teen(s) for taking a stand with which others disagree. Do this without saying anything to indicate that this stand also expresses or contradicts your own position.

➤ Clarify universal core values that are summed up in the ground rules. For example:

- Everyone has value.
- Discrimination is always wrong.
- No one should ever be forced to do or say something against his/her own will.
- Honesty is important.

**Support a position that embodies a core value if none of the participants supports that position.** For example, if the entire group disagrees with a values statement that "Everyone should have the same rights, irrespective of race/ethnicity, biological sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity," you might point out some basic human rights, like the right to be safe and fed and the right to speak one's beliefs.

**As facilitator, remain neutral.** When appropriate, you might express your personal value, but stress to the group that this is your *own personal* value and is not the only one or perhaps even the commonly held one. Remind participants that values are individual and that no particular value is the *only* one. Be sure to share your values *sparingly*; you want the participants to explore and clarify *their* values and how to act in accord with their values, not to agree with your values, however laudable you think they are.

**If the session gets out of hand, remind participants of the purpose of the exercise.** The purpose is to explore their own values and to become comfortable listening to and understanding values and opinions that differ from their own. The purpose is *not* to divide the group or to convince others of the rightness of particular values.

\* Adapted from *Guide to Implementing TAP: A Peer Education Program to Prevent HIV and STI* (2nd edition), © 2002, Advocates for Youth, Washington, DC.

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