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AIDS...What's Ahead?



World AIDS Day is December 1st. People around the world wear a red ribbon on this day to raise awareness. Although there have been some advances in the development of medical treatments and vaccines, education for all of us remains the most effective weapon against AIDS.

What is AIDS? AIDS stands for Acquired Immuno-deficiency Syndrome. AIDS is the advanced stage of the disease caused by a virus called HIV- Human Immunodeficiency Virus. This virus attacks and seriously damages the body's immune system, its defense against disease. Without the protection of the immune system, people with AIDS suffer from fatal infections and cancers.

HIV infections is not an easy virus to catch. HIV is passed from person to person through blood and body fluids (fluids that are normally inside your body). Most often HIV is spread through sexual contact involving anal or vaginal intercourse. It can also be passed between drug users who share needles (including those who use injectable steroids).

HIV cannot be caught from a toilet seat, or from kissing, or from normal everyday contact with a person with HIV. HIV cannot be caught from swimming pools, water fountains, tears or saliva. You must have direct contact with an HIV-infected persons blood or body fluids, including sperm or vaginal fluids. If you are sexually active you are at risk of catching HIV as well as many other sexually transmitted diseases.

Contrary to popular belief AIDS is not only a disease of the homosexual (gay) population, nor is it only found in large cities. AIDS can affect anyone who is sexually active. Black or white, young or old, rich or poor, male or female, straight or gay, it does not discriminate. In fact more teenagers are becoming HIV positive today than ever before and many persons who have full blown AIDS were infected as teenagers.

It is not the person who know they are HIV positive that is a threat. It is those who are unknowingly spreading the disease that are the reason that HIV is spreading so quickly. A person can be HIV positive for many years before having any symptoms or becoming ill. In that time they may innocently pass the disease on to others including sexual partners, those they share needles with or their unborn baby.

It is important to become educated about AIDS and HIV so that you will make wise decisions in your personal life. The only safe sex is no sex unless you are in a loving, lasting relationship with one person. (That doesn't mean one person this week and another next, it means that you are the only person your partner is having sex with). After careful consideration if you choose to be sexually active you can practice *safer sex*. This means using a condom properly every time you have sexual intercourse. However this is not a 100% fool- proof method. Condoms are available through the SAC or at the Student Health Centre or can be purchased at your local drugstore. Remember it is important to know your partners sexual history.

Testing for HIV has increasingly inquired about. There are two means of testing for HIV. The first being #1. Anonymous Testing- Do not provide name

No test results on record

Information is not kept that links your name

You can have this type of testing in Moncton at the Sexual Health Clinic at 656-3310.

#2. Regular Non- confidential Testing- Provide medicare or health insurance number
Report to lab for regular blood sampling

*** Remember that Pre and Post HIV counselling with results is provided.**

Facts

* "AIDS is a preventable infectious disease that has reached epidemic proportions.

* By the end of 2002, there were an estimated 14 million children under age 15 who had lost one or both parents to AIDS. By the year 2010, that number is expected to jump to 25 million.

* An increasing number of women are contracting AIDS, 63% from heterosexual contact.

* As of March 31/97 14,836 cases have been reported in Canada and at least 50,000 Canadian have contracted the virus.

* Each year as many as 5000 more people are infected in Canada. Over half of these are younger than 25 years old!

* Youth are especially at risk for HIV because of their experimentation with sex, alcohol and drugs."

Sources

"AIDS in the 90's The new facts of life" pamphlet by Health and Welfare Canada, 1991

HIV Risk Reduction, pamphlet by AIDS New Brunswick, 65 Brunswick St., Fredericton, N.B. E3B 1G5
Canadian AIDS Society, Suite 400 - 100 Sparks Street, Ottawa, Ontario, K1P 5B2

<http://www.avert.org>

<http://www.unaids.org>

<http://www.aidsnb.com>

For more information

This article cannot possibly give you all the facts so please if you require further information about AIDS or any sexually transmitted disease contact the Student Health Centre at 364-2163, Sexual Health Clinic in Moncton at 856-3310, the AIDS New Brunswick Hotline at 1-800-561-4009 (toll free) or visit the AIDS New Brunswick web site www.aidsnb.com