

## **Key Messages on HIV/AIDS for Chinese Children and Young People**

### **1. AIDS is a severe infectious disease caused by the AIDS virus.**

AIDS stands for “acquired immune deficiency syndrome”

AIDS is caused by HIV, the abbreviation for “human immuno-deficiency virus”

When HIV invades the human body, it multiplies and destroys the human immune system gradually, lowering the body’s defense and leading to the development of various infections and tumors, and ultimately death.

### **2. There is no way to tell just by looking at someone whether the person is infected with HIV. A person with HIV can look perfectly healthy but is still able to infect others.**

It takes 2 - 12 weeks to detect the HIV antibody in the blood after HIV enters the human body, and this period is called “window period”. Although antibody cannot be detected during this period, HIV is already in the body and can be passed on to others.

HIV destroys the human immune system in a gradual way. It takes 7 to 10 years for the infected person to become an AIDS patient, and this period is called “incubation period”

During the incubation period, the person infected with HIV can look perfectly normal without any symptoms, but the virus can be passed on to others via high risk behaviors.

When the immune system of the infected person is too severely damaged to maintain daily defense against diseases, the person then becomes an AIDS patient. Symptoms may include chronic low fever, weight loss, sweating, diarrhea, coughing and skin rash.

At present there is no cure for AIDS, but proper treatment can inhibit the virus, as well as offer hope for a longer and healthier life and reduce the risk of infection.

### **3. HIV is transmitted in three ways: sexual contact, blood, and mother-to-child**

HIV exists mainly in the human blood, semen, vaginal secretions, and breast milk, and is transmitted via exchange of virus-infected body fluids.

HIV can be transmitted through sexual contact between men and women or sex between men. The greater number of sex partners, the higher the likelihood of getting infected. Having a sexually transmitted infection increases the risk of getting infected.

Sharing the same syringe in illegal drug injection is a high risk behavior for HIV infection through blood.

Transfusion of contaminated blood and blood product and use of contaminated and un-sterilized needles and intrusive medical devices may lead to HIV infection.

HIV-infected mothers can pass on the virus to their infants during pregnancy,

delivery and breastfeeding.

**4. HIV is not transmitted by everyday contact.**

HIV is a vulnerable virus that dies soon after it leaves the human body.

Saliva, tears, sweat, and urine have very low levels of virus that are not sufficient to infect others. So far no case of such transmission has been found.

HIV is NOT transmitted by daily contact with people living with HIV/AIDS such as:

Handshakes; hugging, and kissing

Eating, riding in the same bus, studying and play together;

Sharing stationary, cooking utensils, toilet, swimming pool, bed and daily appliances;

Coughing and sneezing

Mosquito and insect bites do not transmit HIV, because HIV cannot multiply in the mosquito's body. The trace amount of the virus on the mosquito is not sufficient to cause an infection. No case has been found in the world of transmission by mosquitoes.

**5. The risk of HIV transmission through sex can be reduced and prevented.**

The best way to prevent sexual transmission of HIV is by abstaining from sex.

People who engage in sexual behaviors should be faithful to their partner. Having one sex partner only can prevent or lower the risk of HIV transmission;

The proper use of good quality condoms during sex not only helps prevent pregnancy but also significantly reduces the risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

**6. Say no to drugs to prevent HIV transmission via illegal drug injection**

It is illegal to take drugs.

Drugs lead to loss of judgment and addiction, and consequently greater likelihood of high risk behaviors for HIV infection;

Making the wrong friends, curiosity, not believing the danger of drugs, and lack of self-awareness are the main reasons why young people use drugs. Refusing to try drugs under all circumstances and saying no to temptation is the first step to resist drugs. Contact with people suspected of selling or using drugs increases the risk of using drugs. Exercise caution when making friends in entertainment establishments and other public places.

Accepting drinks and cigarettes from strangers is another important factor leading to drug addiction.

People who share syringes while taking drugs will easily become infected with HIV. Having sexual contact with drug users will increase the risk of infection. Using condom could reduce danger.

People who share syringes run a very high risk of HIV transmission. Having unprotected sex with an injection drug user exposes one to the risk of HIV infection.

**7. Avoid unsafe injection or blood transfusion to prevent blood transmission of HIV**

Unsafe and unnecessary injection is another cause of HIV transmission. Avoid injections when oral medication will suffice, and avoid IV injection when ordinary injection will suffice. Avoid unnecessary blood transfusions.

Go to reputable hospitals only if there is a need to see the doctor, and do not believe in street advertisements. Do not go to unlicensed private clinics for injections, IV injections or dental work.

When visiting a doctor, choose disposable needle and syringe and strictly sterilized medical devices.

Avoid unlicensed beauty parlors and cosmetic surgeons for eyebrow and body tattoo, ear piercing, cosmetic surgery and other intrusive operations.

When needed, use properly tested blood, blood products, plasma substitute and own blood to ensure blood safety.

Donate blood at the Government-approved blood stations. Blood donation can ensure clinical safety of blood without damaging the health of the blood donor.

**8. Counseling and testing for HIV can help you learn your HIV status.**

The government provides free and confidential HIV counseling and antibody prescreening services, and offers free ARV treatment to people living with AIDS in financial difficulties.

Early testing helps you learn your HIV status, get timely treatment for a longer and healthier life, and take steps to prevent the further spread of the virus.

If you have had a high risk behavior or suspect that you might have been infected, go to the local CDC for counseling and testing.

High risk behaviors for HIV infection include:

High risk, i.e. sex with an HIV positive person, someone with multiple sex partners, men having sex with men, and rape, without the use of a condom

Sharing needles in illegal drug use

Having a history of selling blood at an illegal blood clinic;

Suspected use of unsafe injection or blood transfusion when seeking medical care

One of your sex partners has HIV or an STI.

**9. People living with HIV/AIDS are sufferers from the disease. They deserve compassion and care.**

People living with HIV/AIDS have the right to education, work, and healthcare. Their rights are protected by law.

Discrimination and isolation of people living with HIV/AIDS not only does not reduce the spread of AIDS, but also causes fear and social instability.

Disclosing the infection status of a person living with AIDS without his/her consent or attitudes and behaviors that constitute neglect and contempt are all discriminatory behaviors against people living with AIDS.

Young people should care for people living with or affected by HIV/AIDS. Caring and respecting them is caring for ourselves.

**10. Young people should actively learn the facts on AIDS, and share their knowledge with friends and family members.**

AIDS threatens every family, every individual, and affects social development and stability. Preventing AIDS is the responsibility of all.

Actively learn the facts on AIDS, share the knowledge on AIDS prevention and treatment to make your own contribution to the prevention and control of AIDS.

Contact your local CDC for more information, or call a consultation hotline.