

What is the Anti-HIV Test? When can it be taken?

Where can it be taken?

Following HIV infection, your body produces special antibodies to fight the virus. The Anti-HIV Test measures these antibodies in the blood using the ELISA method. Since the body takes a window period of roughly three months to produce HIV-antibodies in sufficient quantities to be detected, the test should be taken three months after the date of possible infection.

A positive Anti-HIV test can only be confirmed (seropositive) following a Western Blot test which should also be positive. The Anti-HIV Test can be taken in the microbiological department of any university hospital or other private or state hospital.

Is counselling available?

Advice can be sought in person or by telephone on a range of issues including HIV transmission, the AIDS condition, methods of protection, taking the test, patient care and treatment. Counselling should be sought before taking the test and certainly afterwards.

Is there a treatment for HIV/AIDS?

There have been positive developments in the treatment of HIV/AIDS. Since the HIV virus belongs to a special group known as retroviruses, special anti-retroviral drugs have been developed. Successful treatment can be managed using up to two or three combinations of such drugs. The treatment aims to reduce the presence of the virus in the blood to a minimum level, to reinforce the immune system, to reduce the symptoms of HIV infection, to improve the person's quality of life and to lower rates of AIDS-related mortality. The treatment should be under strict medical supervision and it should not be interrupted. Although most opportunistic infections can be treated this way, no complete cure for AIDS has been found to date.

Can HIV be disinfected?

HIV in sperm or vaginal secretions can only survive for a matter of a few hours outside of the body. In dried blood, the virus dies within a very short period of time. HIV in the blood or bodily secretions of a seropositive person's blood on any surface can be destroyed by:

- boiling the material for a few minutes or washing it at 60°C for thirty minutes.
- the virus can be destroyed by soaking for ten minutes in a solution of household bleach diluted immediately before in ten parts water.

- Using ultraviolet light to destroy the virus is not recommended. Although direct contact with ultraviolet light destroys the virus on a surface, the virus is unaffected if it is beneath the surface.

How can HIV be removed from skin?

As with other bacteria and micro-organisms, washing vigorously with soap and water for at least fifteen seconds can remove all trace of the HIV virus. After washing, the skin can be swabbed with alcohol. In the case of a wound, iodine or betadine should be used as an antiseptic following a wash with soap and water.

Dear friends, pay attention to AIDS and make sure that you are aware of the issue. Share what you know with your friends and relatives. Learn the secret of a long, active and happy life — use what you have learned to protect yourself and others. AIDS can only be prevented by understanding and exploiting the right information.

LISTEN! LEARN! LIVE!



For more about AIDS and how you can help HIV-positive people: **AIDS Savaşım Derneği, Rumeli Caddesi, İpek Apartmanı No 70/7, 80220 Osmanbey, İstanbul**
Telephone: +90 (0)212 231 07 60 or 219 93 41
Email: tasd@turk.net
Web site: www.aidsderneği.org.tr

Support us by making a donation through:
Türkiye İş Bankası İstanbul Tıp Fakültesi Çapa Şubesi/İstanbul
Bank Account No: 1200 30440 3084081

**Girls,
boys,
ladies,
gentlemen ...**

a word about

AIDS

**Listen,
Learn,
Live!**



What is AIDS? What kind of disease is it?

AIDS is transmitted by viral infection. The virus is called HIV. When HIV infects the body, it attacks and destroys the immune system which protects us against other infections. Having destroyed the body's resistance, HIV leaves the body open to infection by other diseases which in turn cause other illnesses.

What does HIV-positive mean?

People who have the HIV virus in their blood are diagnosed HIV-positive — that is they will have tested seropositive for HIV antibodies in their blood.

What are the symptoms of AIDS?

Following infection, HIV can take between 5 and 15 years and in some cases longer — depending upon an individual's level of resistance — before symptoms show. The HIV virus takes hold in the body's cells, especially CD4 blood cells where it will reproduce. The blood count becomes depleted as more and more CD4 cells are damaged and the immune system effectively crashes.

As the immune system runs down, diseases and infections which would not normally affect us begin to appear: enlarged lymph glands, sores around the mouth, marks and lesions on the skin, inexplicably high temperatures for protracted periods of time, night sweats, weight loss, diarrhoea and coughing are typical symptoms. Tuberculosis, thrush and other bacterial and fungal diseases known as 'opportunistic infections' develop. A person suffering a number of these symptoms at the same time may have AIDS. Although Kaposi's sarcoma (an otherwise rare form of skin cancer) and lymphoma are the clearest symptoms, a HIV test is necessary for positive diagnosis of HIV infection.

How is HIV transmitted?

The three modes of transmission are through sexual intercourse, infected blood and from a mother to her unborn child.

Sexual transmission: between 80 and 85% of cases are the result of unprotected sexual intercourse. The HIV virus can be transmitted in blood, sperm and vaginal secretions during sexual intercourse, through the vagina, penis or anus or via abrasions in the mouth or on the skin, from man to woman, woman to man, man to man or woman to woman. Apart from AIDS, other venereal diseases can be transmitted through sexual intercourse such as gonorrhoea, syphilis and viral hepatitis.

Blood transmission: between 10 and 15% of cases are the result of infected blood or blood products since a HIV-positive person carries the virus in his or her blood. There are various modes of transmission:

- Uncontrolled or unchecked blood transfusions.
- Used or undisinfected syringes, needles, surgical instruments, dental equipment, tattooing paraphernalia, acupuncture needles, razors, scissors or any instrument which can puncture or lacerate the skin may be a vehicle for transmission.
- A man or woman carrying the virus can transmit it through blood from their sexual organs (including menstrual blood) in contact with another's mouth, penis or vagina.
- Drug users sharing syringes, needles and spoons can transmit the virus to one another.
- Transplantation of HIV-infected organs, cells or sperm.

Mother to baby transmission: 5–10% of cases are infected this way. A mother can transmit the virus to her child during pregnancy, labour and breastfeeding. Around 30% of HIV-positive mothers transmit the virus to their babies in this way. This rate may be reduced 7% with treatment during pregnancy. Although the rate of infection via breastfeeding is negligible, nevertheless it is not recommended that HIV-positive mothers breastfeed their children. For more information about HIV/AIDS and pregnancy, contact the AIDS Advisory Centre.

In which situations is HIV/AIDS not transmitted?

HIV cannot be transmitted in everyday situations such as being in the same room, studying at the same school or breathing the same air. Infection does not occur through:

- normal contact with bodily fluids or secretions such as saliva, tears, sweat, sneezes, coughs, urine or faeces.
- physical contact such as shaking hands, touching, hugging and kissing.
- sharing food, drink, cutlery or crockery, telephones, toilets, showers, drinking fountains, swimming pools, the sea or saunas.
- Mosquitoes and other biting or stinging insects, cats, dogs and other animals cannot transmit HIV/AIDS.

How can we protect ourselves from HIV/AIDS?

Since sexual transmission is the most common mode because HIV can be transmitted through every form of sexual contact, the condom is your greatest ally in your sexual life. Always use a condom even if the possibility of infection appears to be remote. A common misconception is that the virus is only contracted from prostitutes, drug users and homosexuals. However AIDS is not restricted to any particular social group. The disease can infect anyone regardless of gender, race, colour, religion or age. Once contracted through having unprotected sex with a HIV-positive person, the virus can be passed on to subsequent sexual partners. HIV-positive people should protect themselves and their partners from further risk of infection by always using a condom.

- Blood which has not been checked for the HIV virus should never be used for transfusion. Blood can only be used if it has been tested negative.
- Don't allow undisinfected syringes, needles, surgical instruments, dental equipment, tattooing paraphernalia, acupuncture needles, razors or scissors to be used on you.
- Your body is yours — if you have any questions regarding the ELISA test, don't hesitate to ask.
- Individuals who have tested HIV-positive should definitely not give blood following the test.
- Don't forget that infected sperm, bodily secretions or blood can infect you through broken areas of skin such as a cut or a graze — protect yourself with a sticking plaster.

How can we protect ourselves against AIDS in our sexual lives?

For those who want to protect themselves:

- Have a healthy, monogamous relationship with your partner.
- Use a condom in every sexual activity — vaginal, anal or oral — whether it be with a man or a woman.
- Try alternatives to sexual intercourse such as stroking, kissing, mutual masturbation or massage.

Useful information for your sexual life:

The risk of HIV/AIDS transmission increases with the number of sexual partners. Alcohol and drugs impair your judgement which can lead to unwise or negative decisions regarding your sexual behaviour.