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Debunking Medical Myths: Getting the Facts about HIV

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Getting the Facts about HIV

What is HIV?
HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) attacks important cells that protect against infection and disease, which greatly increases risk for life-threatening illnesses.

How do people get HIV?
Worldwide, 70% of HIV infections are from heterosexual sexual transmission

What can spread HIV?
- Saliva and skin contact will NOT spread HIV, including hugging, handshakes, kissing, coughing, or sharing a drink.
- Semen, blood, and breast milk CAN spread HIV.

HIV Drugs & Viral Load

HIV Drugs & Viral Load

Do HIV drugs help with spread?
The odds of spreading HIV to a partner depends on the viral load (VL) which measures the amount of live virus within the body.

HIV positive patients commonly take ART (antiretroviral therapy) drugs to prevent viruses from entering their bloodstream.

With treatment, individuals with a VL of <1000 copies/ml rarely transmit HIV to their partners!

In a recent study:

782 Couples with someone on ART and a low viral load
76,088 Instances of unprotected sex
0 Times HIV was spread

HIV Drugs & Viral Load

Tips to Stay Safe with HIV

1. Use condoms
2. Avoid sharing needles
3. Get tested early
4. Take ART drugs as prescribed by your physician if HIV positive

Protected Sex and HIV

Condom use alone reduces the risk of spread from an HIV positive partner by 60-96%.

Condom use combined with ART reduces infection risk by 99%.

The combination of ART, condom use, and a low viral load can effectively prevent HIV spread etween partners.

Reference List:
https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/basics/whatishiv.html

Yellow 50: Amanda Paskavitz, Jennifer Schmidt, Justin Bennie, Christelle Wharram, Eli Tanenbaum, Andrew Demko