

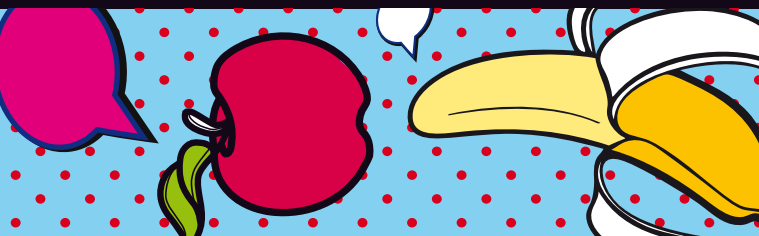


**AIDS
SOLIDARITY
MOVEMENT**



**Informative Guide
for HIV Protection
and Prevention**

1. How HIV is transmitted and how you can protect yourself



Anal sex (safe sex, unsafe sex, bareback, fisting):

HIV is spread primarily through unprotected sex.

ATTENTION: HIV does not distinguish whether you are top or bottom. HIV is transmitted through bodily fluids such as semen, pre-cum, rectal mucus and blood. It is not transmitted through saliva, urine, tears and sweat.

The appropriate use of condoms and lubricants can protect you from the sexual transmission of HIV.



Oral sex (blowjob, rimming):

During oral sex, HIV may be transmitted via cuts or sores in the mouth. Ejaculation in the mouth increases the possibility of transmission, especially if you have cuts, sores, ulcers, thrush, sore throat or any other kind of inflammation of the mouth. Having dental work increases the likelihood of open sores and cuts in the mouth.

Brushing and flossing also disrupt the integrity of the gums increasing the likelihood of transmission, therefore they are not recommended before or after oral sex. ATTENTION: The transmission risk is similar whether you swallow or spit semen.



Using a condom as protection – how safe is it?

Using a condom, as well as a water-based lubricant (not an oil-based one), offers high protection from HIV. If the condom breaks, is torn, or removed during sex, the transmission risk increases.

For free, anonymous, confidential HIV testing, please contact the Gregorios HIV/AIDS Clinic in Larnaca (tel: +357 2480 0466). If necessary, you will be prescribed Post-Exposure Prophylaxis [PEP] (preventative treatment) for about a month. This treatment might

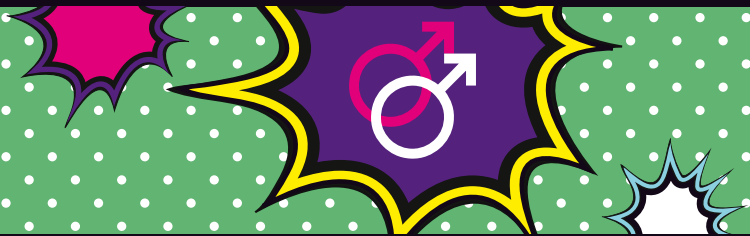
prevent infection from the virus, if you have been exposed, but it is not a guaranteed solution. The treatment should start at the latest 72 hours after sexual contact, so do not delay getting in contact with the clinic. All your personal details will be treated with utmost confidentiality at the Clinic.



Sex and Drugs - Chemsex (poppers, crystal, meth):

Taking recreational drugs during sex increases the risk of HIV transmission, as the people engaged in the practice are often not fully in control of their actions. Rough sex (under the influence of drugs or not) entails an even higher risk of infection, as the penis and anus are very likely to be injured.

HIV may also be transmitted through the sharing of sharp objects, such as razors, or needles.



One sexual contact is enough to get infected with HIV

If the infection is not under control the viral load is high. However, when a person living with HIV follows the prescribed treatment (AntiRetroviral Treatment), the viral load decreases substantially to the point it becomes “undetectable” and the risks of transmission are reduced dramatically, almost diminishing.

Therefore, it is very important to know your HIV status, in order to protect yourself, as well as the others. In several cases, a person is not aware they are living with HIV. Remember that you cannot distinguish people living with HIV just from their looks. The only way to know your HIV status is through a test.

If you have another sexually transmitted disease, the risk of HIV transmission is extremely higher.

2. Places where you can have a free, anonymous and confidential HIV test



**FREE HIV
TESTING!**

LARNACA

**Gregorios Clinic, Larnaca General Hospital, 6th floor,
Tel. +357 2480 0466**

NICOSIA

**Disease Control Centre at Makarios Hospital,
Tel. +357 2230 5155**

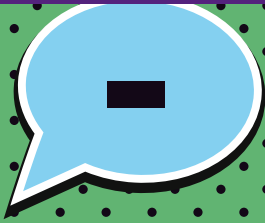
**Dr. Burhan Nalbantoglu State Hospital,
Department of Infectious Diseases,
Tel. +90 533 845 37 22**

LIMASSOL

**Linopetra Health Centre,
Tel. +357 2580 4102**

3. What “HIV+” means

- **Being HIV positive** means that you have been infected, hence you carry the HIV virus in your blood. The virus gradually attacks your healthy body cells, deteriorating your immune system, making you more vulnerable to various ordinary infections and diseases, such as pneumonia, hepatitis or even an ordinary cold.
- If you are living with HIV you can live a normal life, as long as you follow the relevant medical treatment, the AntiRetroviral Treatment (ART).
- An HIV positive person does not die of AIDS nowadays, when he/she follows the prescribed medical treatment. Living with HIV does not mean you are a patient. HIV is a chronic condition which is dealt with medical treatment. The medication reduces the amount of virus in your blood, 'like putting it to sleep', hence, the risk of transmission is very low, almost non-existent.
- In Cyprus, medical treatment is offered free of charge. Your health check-ups, as well as any other routine-tests, are also provided for free, at Gregorios Clinic, where all your personal details are treated with the utmost confidentiality. It is essential to take your medication as prescribed by your doctor, without any interruptions, in order to maintain an undetectable viral load and to prevent drug resistance.
- If you are living with HIV and you do not take your medication (ARV), you are putting your life at high risk. Also, a high viral load increases the risk of transmission.



- **Sex:** If you are living with HIV, you have the right not to inform your sexual partners about your HIV status. However, it is your responsibility to always have safe sex. The use of condoms protects from other sexually transmitted diseases and prevents HIV transmission. Sex without protection between two people living with HIV also carries high risk, as there are different HIV types, some of which are more aggressive than others. If you are infected with a different HIV type from the one you already have, your ARV treatment may not be as effective.
- If you are living with HIV, avoid anything that might weaken your immune system. The best way to keep fit and healthy is to follow your medical treatment carefully, without interruptions, always use a condom, refrain from using drugs, do not consume much alcohol and follow a healthy lifestyle.

4. HIV and Human Rights

Every person has the right to dignity. Your human rights are indisputable. Learn about them and claim what is yours:

- **Every person has the right to sexual freedom**, including the right to refuse sexual contact without protection.
- **As a person living with HIV, you are still an equal member of society** and deserve equal treatment, especially when it comes to employment, shelter, education, justice, social welfare, privacy, choice of residence and political opinion. Any discrimination based on one's HIV status is strictly prohibited.
- **At work, when it comes to hiring, no questions regarding your sexual preferences are allowed** and you are not obliged to report your health condition to your employer. Firing an HIV positive person or worsening his/her working condition because of his/her HIV status is not allowed.
- **You are entitled to prompt, proper and quality health service** (hospitalization and medical treatment) in decent conditions, like any other patient. The fear of HIV transmission is not an acceptable excuse for refusing to offer treatment to a person living with HIV.
- **You are entitled to be fully informed about your health** (test results, medication, etc.) and to strict confidentiality of your personal details, which is a basic rule for all healthcare professionals. No doctor, or other staff member has the right to inform your spouse, relatives, or sexual partner of your HIV status.

5. Where to find help

- **More information on HIV and HIV testing may be acquired confidentially and anonymously from the AIDS Solidarity Movement, tel. +357 9960 9070.**
- If you believe that you have been discriminated against due to your HIV positive status, either in the public or private sectors, you should contact the Commissioner for Administration and Human Rights (Ombudsman) immediately.

Tel.: +357 2240 5500

Fax.: +357 2267 2881

E-mail: ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.cy

Web: www.ombudsman.gov.cy


- If you have been mistreated by a member of the medical staff of a hospital, contact the Patients' Complaint Review Committee

Nicosia: Tel.: +357 2260 3680

Limassol: Tel.: +357 2580 1231

Larnaca: Tel.: +357 2480 0510

Paphos: Tel.: +357 2680 3476



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**EA
TG** European
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