

Women and HIV/AIDS

HIV is the virus that causes AIDS. There is no known cure. The virus is transmitted through body fluids (e.g. blood, semen, saliva, vaginal secretions)

Women are the fastest growing group becoming infected with HIV.

During unprotected heterosexual sex with an HIV-infected partner, women appear to be more easily infected with HIV than do men. Anal sex also increases a woman's risk. Lesbian women are at risk, too, since HIV is transmitted when infected blood and/or vaginal secretions come in contact with a woman's genitals, mouth or with open cuts anywhere on the body.

To reduce your chances of contracting HIV:

1. Practice abstinence (not having sex).
2. Do not share needles or syringes for drug use, vitamins, steroids, tattoos or body piercing.
3. Before you have sex, make sure your partner is uninfected. You can:
 - ▶ Ask your partner if he/she is HIV+.
 - ▶ Suggest getting tested and ask to see their results. Since it can take three to six months for HIV to show up on a test, you and/or your partner may need to be tested again after six months.
 - ▶ Tests can be either anonymous or confidential. The difference is that you do not have to give your name in an anonymous test and you do in a confidential test. Home-based kits are also available at pharmacies and by mail. Choose a test that is approved by the FDA.
4. If you have sex, protect yourself by using latex condoms and a water-based lubricant like K-Y Jelly. (If you are allergic to latex, use a male or female condom made from polyurethane.)

This information is general. If your doctor tells you something different, follow his or her instructions.

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For more information about women's health issues, stop by our Resource Center at 2000 West First Street, Piedmont Plaza II, 1st Floor, Winston Salem, NC 27104, visit our website at <http://www.wakehealth.edu/WHCOE/> or contact us at (336) 713-4220.