Facilitator Guide 2025

Understanding HIV

(Human Immunodeficiency Virus)

MULTICULTURAL HIV AND HEPATITIS SERVICE

NSW GOVERNMENT

Statement of acknowledgement

I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we live and work, and I pay my respects to their Elders past, present, and emerging. I recognise their ongoing connection to land, water, and community, and I honour their rich cultural heritage and contributions.

Acknowledgement of Country

Artwork

Ngurang Dali Mana Burudi — a place to get better

The map was created by our Aboriginal Health staff telling the story of a cultural pathway for our community to gain better access to healthcare.

Artwork by Aboriginal artist Lee Hampton utilising our story.

Contents

Introduction

The **Understanding Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)** education package was created by the NSW Multicultural HIV and Hepatitis Service (MHAHS) as part of a series of community education toolkits designed specifically for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities.

There is a series of five education packages including:

- Understanding Hepatitis B
- Understanding Hepatitis C
- Understanding Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)
- Understanding Sexually Transmissible Infections (STIs)
- Understanding Liver Health

Each education package is designed to be delivered independently from the others, and all include a facilitator's guide (PDF) and a slide presentation (PowerPoint or PDF) available on the MHAHS website – www.mhahs.org.au.

The information provided in the **Understanding Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)** education package aims to:

- Increase participant awareness and knowledge about HIV prevention, testing, and treatment
- Promote regular testing for people at risk of getting HIV
- Encourage participants and their communities to access NSW healthcare services
- Address misinformation and stigma that people may have about HIV
- Provide participants and their communities with accurate, up-to-date information
- Provide links to health and support services across NSW.

About the MHAHS

The NSW MHAHS supports people from diverse cultural and language backgrounds across New South Wales to address HIV, hepatitis B, hepatitis C, and sexual health. It works with communities to provide information, education, and support to improve access to health care for all.

The NSW MHAHS also partners with health services and community organisations to provide culturally tailored health education and multilingual programs to empower communities with knowledge and tools they need to navigate the health care system confidently.

NSW MHAHS is hosted by Sydney Local Health District.

Email: info@mhahs.org.au

MULTICULTURAL HIV
AND HEPATITIS SERVICE

About the facilitator guide

This facilitator guide is a practical resource to support individuals and organisation in delivering the **Understanding HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus)** community education sessions to culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities across NSW, using the accompanying slide presentation.

The guide is designed to help facilitators provide participants with information about HIV in a simple and clear way. It equips facilitators with the knowledge and resources necessary to conduct an effective, non-judgmental, and informative session.

This guide provides facilitators with clear instructions for delivering community education sessions. It includes step-by-step support for presenting each part of the slide presentation, making easy to follow and deliver. Each slide includes detailed and structured scripts to guide facilitators in delivering the session.

It includes:

- Presentation slides covering essential information on HIV
- Facilitator notes with key talking points and explanations for each slide including references
- Instructions for facilitating discussions and engaging participants
- Activity suggestions to promote active learning and participation
- Sample evaluation form for gathering participant feedback after the session
- A glossary explaining various terms relating to HIV
- Reference list with links to multilingual resources and further information.

By using this guide, facilitators can:

- Explain HIV – what it is, how it is transmitted and the health effects on individuals
- Encourage participants and their communities to get tested and treated for HIV
- Clarify common myths and reduce stigma surrounding HIV
- Guide participants on where to access HIV testing, treatment, and support.

Who is this information for?

The information in the presentation is for CALD community members (adults and young people). The information is available in a range of community languages including Arabic, Bengali, Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, Indonesian, Nepali, Portuguese, Spanish, Thai and Urdu.

Who can facilitate the education session?

The facilitator guide has been developed to prepare and support the facilitator delivering the community education session.

The information is designed for anyone interested in learning about HIV and who is interested in educating others. Education sessions can be delivered by bilingual facilitators with an interest in raising awareness about BBVs, STIs and liver health in their community. Ideally, facilitators should have experience in delivering community education. It is also important for facilitators to be aware of the sensitive topics and cultural considerations that may arise during the session.

No prior medical knowledge is required and this guide provides all necessary information for facilitators to confidently deliver the session.

Preparing to deliver community education sessions

To effectively deliver the community education sessions, it is recommended that facilitators:

- Familiarise themselves with the content of both the slide presentation and the facilitator guide
- Consider translating the talking points written in italics under each slide into your language
- Read the recommended articles and visit the suggested websites
- Practise delivering the content to ensure smooth delivery and familiarity with the flow of the session
- Test equipment to make sure it is set up and working properly before the session begins.

These steps will help facilitators feel more confident and prepared to deliver an informative session.

How long is needed to deliver the education session?

The slide presentation contains a lot of information, so please adapt the content from the slides and facilitator guide to best suit your group's needs.

While the recommended duration for the education session is 30-45 minutes, this can be adjusted depending on your audience and the setting.

If possible, remain available after the session to address any additional questions. Facilitators have the flexibility to shorten or extend the session by focusing on key slides or incorporating more time for discussion.

What is the delivery mode of the education session?

The education session can be delivered in various formats:

- **Face-to-face:** ideal for community gatherings, workplaces, and group sessions
- **Virtual or webinar format:** facilitators can deliver the session via Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or any other virtual platforms
- **Mixed approach:** it can be a combination of in-person and virtual delivery for broader accessibility.

Regardless of the delivery method, facilitators are encouraged to make sessions interactive and engaging, allowing participants to ask questions and share experiences.

Talking about BBVs, STIs and Liver Health

When discussing BBVs (HIV, hepatitis B and C), STIs, and liver health, it is important to approach the conversation with cultural sensitivity, empathy, and accurate information.

The information around these topics can be very sensitive, particularly for people from CALD communities, as discussing sexual health may be considered uncomfortable or a taboo in some communities.

Many people may have concerns about stigma, discrimination, or misunderstandings related to these topics. Facilitators should create a safe and respectful environment where participants feel comfortable discussing and learning about BBVs, STIs and liver health.

Sensitivities

It is important for facilitators to recognise that these topics can be difficult for some people and that participants or their loved ones may have personal experiences related to BBVs, STIs, or liver disease. It's also important to use non-judgmental language and remind everyone that the session focuses on health and well-being.

Privacy and confidentiality should always be respected, and participants should be assured they don't have to share personal experiences unless they choose to. Facilitators should use inclusive and culturally appropriate language and adjust their language to suit the audience's literacy levels, keeping everything simple and clear.

Stigma and discrimination

When planning the education sessions, consider that many people with BBVs, STIs or poor liver health may experience stigma and discrimination. This can prevent them from seeking testing, treatment, and support. Facilitators need to understand that stigma can come from fear, misinformation, and cultural beliefs.

The community education sessions:

- Emphasise that BBVs, STIs and poor liver health are medical conditions that can be cured or treated and managed and prevented in many cases
- Explain that stigma creates barriers for people to access healthcare. This can increase the risk of passing on to other people
- Educate participants on the facts about transmission and prevention to challenge myths and misconceptions
- Address concerns about confidentiality by explaining that testing and treatment services are private and professional
- Promote an inclusive and respectful discussion, avoiding any blame or shame.

Common risk factors and barriers specific to CALD populations

- Limited access to healthcare due to language barriers, migration status, and lack of familiarity with the healthcare system or financial constraints can prevent people from getting tested, treatment and support.
- Cultural beliefs and stigma: In some cultures, discussions around sexual health, BBVs, and STIs may be considered taboo, leading to avoidance or delayed testing and treatment.
- Lack of culturally appropriate health information about BBVs, STIs and liver health.
- Different health beliefs and traditional medicine practices, which may impact engagement with mainstream healthcare services.
- Increased vulnerability due to migration experiences, such as trauma, displacement, or lack of stable housing.
- Having been born or have lived in country where BBVs are common.
- Fear of stigma and judgment from family, community, or healthcare providers.
- Mistrust of the healthcare system, especially among newly arrived migrants or refugees.
- The lack of symptoms for some of the BBVs, STIs and liver diseases which leads people to believe they do not need to be tested.

Planning for the information session

Facilitators or organisations should take the time to prepare the materials they need, book a venue, and promote the education session to groups of people who might be interested in the topic.

The following checklist will help you organise your session.

Action	Tick off
Booking a venue	
Consider the number of participants to match the seating availability.	
Choose a comfortable, accessible location that suits your audience (e.g., community centre, library, health service, or online platform for virtual sessions).	
Ensure the venue has the necessary facilities (Wi-Fi, projector, seating, parking, toilets, fire emergency exits, accessibility for people with disabilities, etc.).	
Promoting the session via your networks	
Advertise the session through community groups, social media, local health services, and word-of-mouth.	
Use multilingual flyers, posters, or digital invitations if necessary	
If applicable, partner with local organisations that engage with the target community.	
Consider the gender make up – is there a preference for male only or female only groups?	
Consider any cultural or religious key dates when you plan the session (e.g. is it a fasting period?).	
What you will need for the information session	
Equipment • Laptop (if presenting slides or playing videos). • Projector or TV screen (for in-person sessions). • Microphone/speaker system (for larger venues). • Internet access (if sharing online resources).	
Presentation Materials • PowerPoint presentation (PPT) and facilitator manual (digital or printed copies). • Printed handouts for participants (if relevant). • Evaluation forms (in English and other relevant languages).	
Name Tags (for in-person sessions) • Helps create a welcoming and interactive environment. • Use name stickers or pre-printed name tags if needed.	

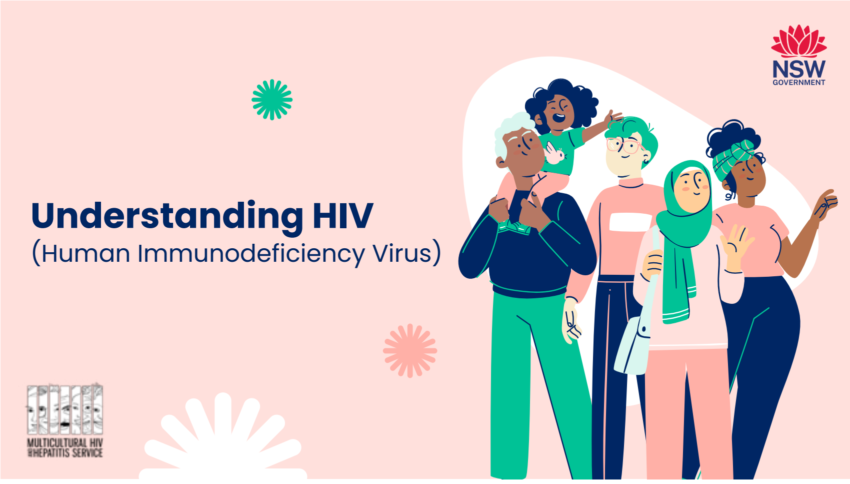
Planning for the information session (cont...)

Action	Tick off
What you will need for the information session	
Stationery • Pens, markers, and paper for note-taking, activities, or participant feedback. • Whiteboard or flipchart (if using for group discussions).	
Multilingual Resources • Printed or digital fact sheets and brochures on BBVs, STIs, liver health and available health services. • Interpreter information (e.g., contact details for TIS National). • Links to multicultural health services such as MHAHS for further support.	

Key takeaways for facilitators:

- **Clear Information:** Use simple, straightforward language to explain HIV and its impact on health.
- **Empathy:** Approach sensitive topics with understanding and without judgment.
- **Engagement:** Create a safe and open space for participants to ask questions and share their experiences.
- **Action:** Encourage participants to get tested, treated, and access support as needed

Slide 1



Understanding HIV

(Human Immunodeficiency Virus)

Facilitator instruction

- Welcome the group to the education session

  Good [morning/afternoon/evening] everyone, and welcome to today's session called HIV which stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus.

- Introduce yourself to the group

  My name is [Your Name], and I work as [Your Role] at [Your Workplace].
  It's great to have you all here.

- Provide an acknowledgement of the Country

  Before we begin, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet today. I pay my respects to Elders past, present, and emerging and recognize the importance of cultural heritage in health and wellbeing.

- Explain any housekeeping information, e.g. evacuation procedures, location of bathrooms, finishing time, any rules, etc

- Explain that if anyone feels uncomfortable with any information in this session, they are welcome to excuse themselves.

  This session is about understanding HIV. We'll be discussing for example, how HIV is transmitted, who should get tested, available treatments, and ways to protect yourself and others. This is a safe space to learn and ask questions, and we encourage open discussion. However, if at any point you feel uncomfortable, you are welcome to step out or speak with me privately after the session.

Slide 2

Today we will talk about...

- ✓ HIV basics: What you need to know
- ✓ Testing and treatment: Taking control of your health
- ✓ Preventing HIV: Steps you can take to protect yourself
- ✓ Understanding and breaking the stigma around HIV
- ✓ Sharing your HIV status: What to consider
- ✓ Finding help and support for HIV

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Facilitator notes:

Let's go through what we will be covering in today's session.

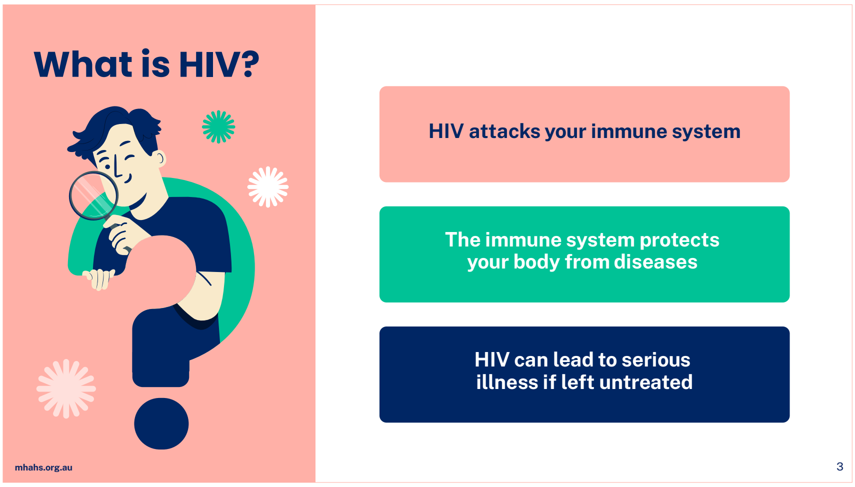
- *We'll begin with the basics — what HIV is, how it affects your body, how you can get it, and symptoms people may have.*
- *Then, we'll explore HIV testing, including who should get tested, the types of tests available, and where you can get tested.*
- *We'll also look at how treatment works, the different treatment options, and how HIV can be prevented.*
- *We'll have a small group discussion about stigma, how it impacts people, and how we can help reduce it.*
- *After that, we'll talk about sharing your HIV status. That is who you should tell about your HIV and who you don't need tell. We'll also look at what the law says, and what to consider.*
- *Finally, I'll show you where to find help and support.*

Feel free to ask questions at any time.

At the end of this session, please take a moment to fill in an evaluation form to helps us improve future education sessions.

Let's get started!

Slide 3



What is HIV?

HIV attacks your immune system

The immune system protects your body from diseases

HIV can lead to serious illness if left untreated

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Facilitator notes:

Let's start by explaining what is HIV? HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus.

- *HIV is a blood-borne virus. This means, you can get infected with HIV when the virus enters your body through your blood.*
- *The HIV virus attacks and weakens your immune system, which is the part of our body that protect us from infections and illness. The immune system is like your body's security team, it fights off germs (like viruses and bacteria) to keep you healthy.*
- *If HIV is not diagnosed and treated early, it can lead to serious health problems.*
- *The good news is there is a very effective treatment for HIV and it can be managed. If you have an early diagnosis and start your treatment straight away, you can live a long, healthy life with HIV without passing it on to others.*
- *That's why testing early and staying on treatment is so important, but we'll talk more about that throughout the session.*

Before we move to the next slide, does anyone have any questions about what HIV is?

Slide 4

Are HIV and AIDS the same thing?

✓ **They are different.**

✓ AIDS stands for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome.

✓ AIDS is when the immune system is very damaged.

✓ AIDS makes you very sick.

Without treatment HIV can cause AIDS

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Facilitator notes:

Discussion:

Ask: *Are HIV and AIDS different things? Can anyone have HIV without having AIDS?*

Acknowledge all answers and politely clarify any misunderstandings.

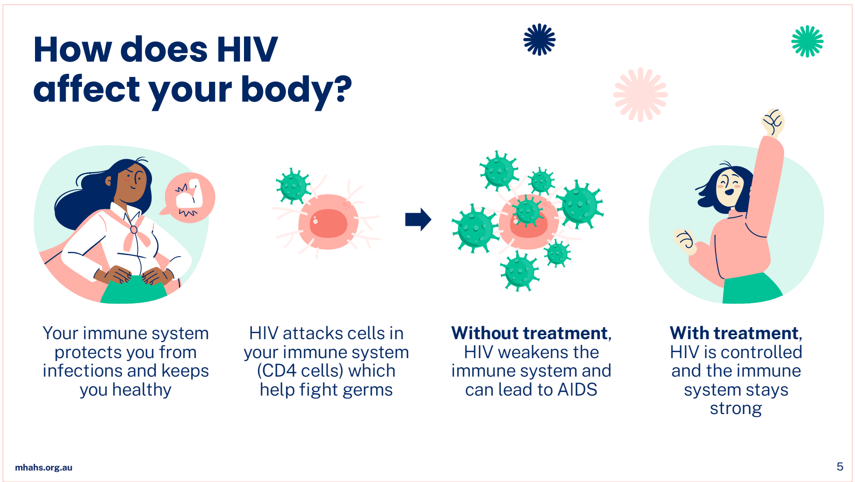
Answer: *Yes, they are different things. And yes, you can live with HIV without having AIDS. Let me explain this more clearly.*

- *It's common to see HIV and AIDS written together, but they are not the same thing.*
- *HIV is the virus that enters the body and weakens the immune system over time.*
- *If HIV is not treated, it can cause AIDS, which stands for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome.*
- *AIDS is the late stage of the disease. At this stage, the immune system becomes very weak, and it can't fight off infections and diseases. AIDS makes you very sick.*
- *The good news is that in Australia almost everyone who is on treatment for HIV does not develop AIDS.*
- *This is why early testing and ongoing treatment are so important.*

On the next slide, I'll show you how HIV can affect your body.

Before we do so, does anyone have any questions?

Slide 5



How does HIV affect your body?

Your immune system protects you from infections and keeps you healthy

HIV attacks cells in your immune system (CD4 cells) which help fight germs

Without treatment, HIV weakens the immune system and can lead to AIDS

With treatment, HIV is controlled and the immune system stays strong

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Facilitator notes:

Now that we’ve talked about the difference between HIV and AIDS, let’s look at how HIV affects the body.

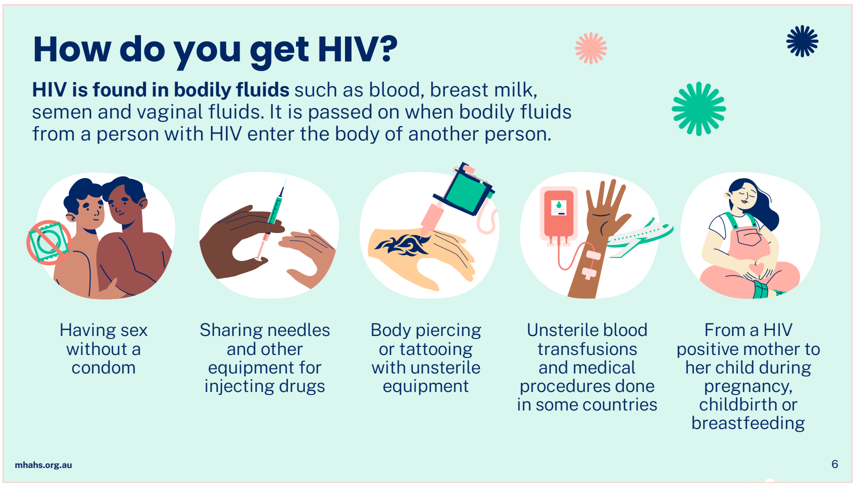
Here’s what happens:

- *HIV attacks and weakens your immune system. As we talked in the previous slide, this is the part of your body that fights infections and keep you healthy.*
- *The immune system is made up of many different cells that work together to fight infections and diseases. Some of these cells are called CD4 or T4 cells.*
- *When HIV enters the CD4 cells, it uses them to make more copies of itself. That means, there will be more HIV in your body. This is referred to as a ‘high viral load’ – that means when there is a lot of HIV in the body.*
- *Over time, as the number of CD4 cells drops, the immune system becomes weaker and can’t fight off infections anymore.*
- *Without treatment the number of CD4 cells in your body will become very low and you could develop AIDS. This means, your body will be open to other diseases or infections, like tuberculosis, pneumonia and some cancers.*
- *In Australia there is good medication to treat HIV. It works very well and allows people to live a long, and healthy life.*

Are there any questions?

Let’s move on to how you get HIV.

Slide 6



How do you get HIV?

HIV is found in bodily fluids such as blood, breast milk, semen and vaginal fluids. It is passed on when bodily fluids from a person with HIV enter the body of another person.

Having sex without a condom

Sharing needles and other equipment for injecting drugs

Body piercing or tattooing with unsterile equipment

Unsterile blood transfusions and medical procedures done in some countries

From a HIV positive mother to her child during pregnancy, childbirth or breastfeeding

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Facilitator notes:

Now that we understand what HIV does to your body, let's talk about how it's passed from one person to another. Please note that these scenarios are if you are not on treatment - you cannot pass on HIV in these situations if you are on treatment.

HIV is found in bodily fluids like blood, breast milk, semen and vaginal fluids. HIV is passed on when the bodily fluids of a person with HIV who is not on treatment enter the body of another person usually through:

- *Having anal or vaginal sex without a condom*
- *Sharing drug injecting equipment*
- *Tattooing, piercing and other procedures with unsterile (unclean) needles or equipment.*
- *Blood transfusions and medical procedures in some countries*
- *HIV positive mother who is not on treatment to child during pregnancy, birth or breastfeeding*
- ***It is important to note that** people living with HIV who are on treatment and have an undetectable amount of HIV in their body cannot pass the virus on.*

Now before we move on to the next slide, let me ask you this question first.

Discussion:

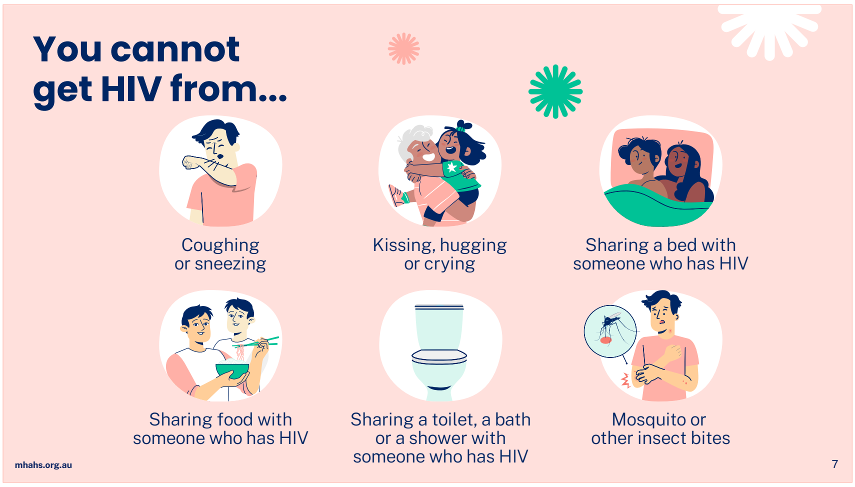
Ask this question: *Can you get HIV by kissing someone or licking someone's face?*

Acknowledge all answers and politely clarify any misunderstandings.

Answer: *No, you can't get HIV through kissing or licking someone's face even though HIV can be found in bodily fluids.*

*It's important to understand how HIV is passed on to help us protect ourselves and others. Let's now move on and talk about how HIV **is not passed on**, because that's just as important.*

Slide 7



You cannot get HIV from...

Coughing or sneezing

Kissing, hugging or crying

Sharing a bed with someone who has HIV

Sharing food with someone who has HIV

Sharing a toilet, a bath or a shower with someone who has HIV

Mosquito or other insect bites

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Facilitator notes:

As I mentioned before people living with HIV who are on treatment and have an undetectable amount of HIV in their body cannot pass the virus on.

In addition you cannot get HIV from everyday contact or activities with other people, like:

- *Coughing or sneezing*
- *Kissing, hugging, crying, or touching someone*
- *Sharing a bed, food, or kitchen's utensils or cutlery with other people*
- *Using the same toilet, bath, or shower with someone who has HIV*
- *Mosquito or other insect bites*

These are all myths, and they often come from fear or a lack of understanding.

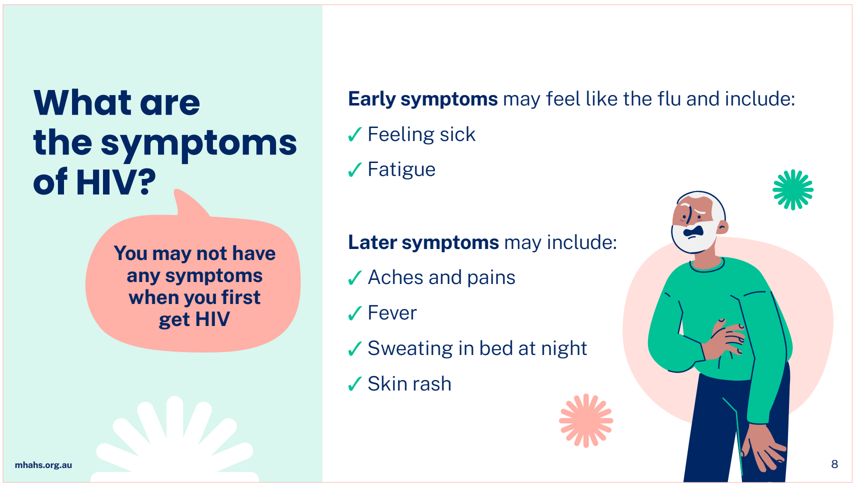
Additional information:

- HIV does not survive long outside the human body. It cannot reproduce on surfaces like cutlery, toilet seats, or bedding.
- You cannot get HIV through air or touch.

Why is it important to say these things?

- Because misinformation has led to stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV for long time, by understanding the truth about HIV, we can help reduce fear, offer support to those affected, and encourage more people to get tested and receive treatment.

Slide 8



What are the symptoms of HIV?

You may not have any symptoms when you first get HIV

Early symptoms may feel like the flu and include:

✓ Feeling sick
✓ Fatigue

Later symptoms may include:

✓ Aches and pains
✓ Fever
✓ Sweating in bed at night
✓ Skin rash

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Facilitator notes:

We’ve discussed how HIV is passed on, now let’s look at what the symptoms might be. It’s important to understand that HIV symptoms can be different from person to person.

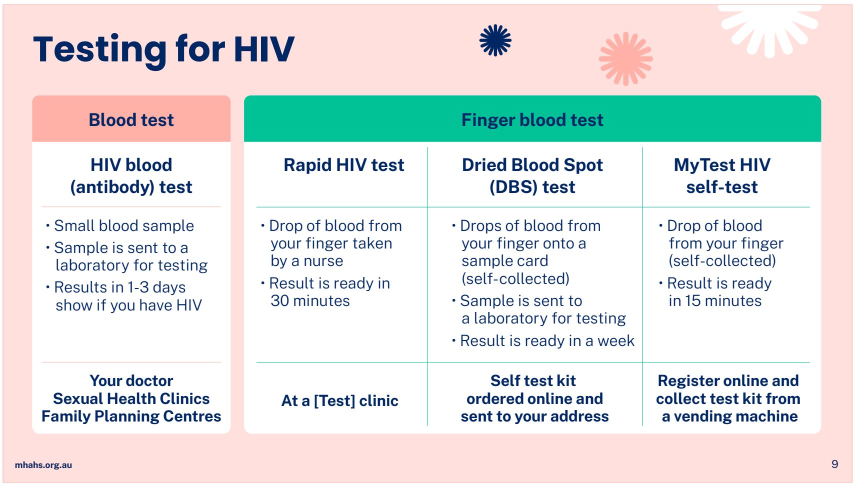
- *The first signs or symptoms of HIV infection can happen within the first 2 to 4 weeks. You may feel sick or tired, like you have the flu.*
- *Some people experience these first symptoms, while others may have no symptoms at all, especially in the beginning. This is why regular testing is important.*
- *For people who have early symptoms, it can feel like the flu. Other common early symptoms are:*
  - *Aches and pains*
  - *Fever*
  - *Sweating in bed at night*
  - *Skin rash*

After the early stage, HIV can remain in your body for long time without showing any signs but continuing to attack your immune system.

The only way to know you have HIV is by having a HIV test. In NSW HIV testing is free, easy and confidential.

Let’s go on to talk about the different types of tests and where to get tested.

Slide 9



Testing for HIV

Blood test	Finger blood test		
HIV blood (antibody) test	**Rapid HIV test**	**Dried Blood Spot (DBS) test**	**MyTest HIV self-test**
• Small blood sample • Sample is sent to a laboratory for testing • Results in 1-3 days show if you have HIV	• Drop of blood from your finger taken by a nurse • Result is ready in 30 minutes	• Drops of blood from your finger onto a sample card (self-collected) • Sample is sent to a laboratory for testing • Result is ready in a week	• Drop of blood from your finger (self-collected) • Result is ready in 15 minutes
Your doctor Sexual Health Clinics Family Planning Centres	**At a [Test] clinic**	**Self test kit ordered online and sent to your address**	**Register online and collect test kit from a vending machine**

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Facilitator notes:

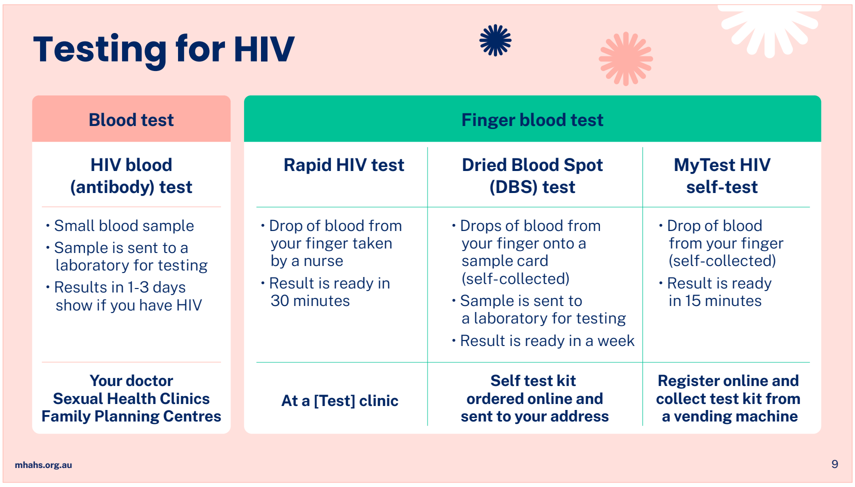
There are several types of HIV tests available in NSW to meet people's needs. They are basically done in two different ways: standard blood test and finger prick blood test. Let's go through each one of these tests on the slide:

- ***HIV blood (antibody)*** *test is the most common HIV test you can do.*
  - *Your doctor, or a nurse will take blood and send it to a laboratory for testing.*
  - *You usually get the results of this blood test between 1 to 3 days. The doctor will tell you if you have HIV or not*

Then you have three types of finger prick HIV tests available in NSW:

- *The first one is the* ***Rapid HIV Test:***
  - *This is a free test for men who have sex with men at a* ***[TEST]*** *sexual health clinics in Sydney.*
  - *You go to the clinic and the nurse will take a drop of blood from your finger and put it in a machine. The test result comes back in 30 minutes. The results of a Rapid HIV test showing HIV are not final and you will need a HIV blood test to confirm the result.*
- *The next one is the* ***Dried Blood Spot Test (DBS):***
  - *This is a free self-testing option that you order online and collect the blood sample yourself. You prick your finger and draw a few drops of blood onto a sample card.*
  - *When the sample card is dried, you send it back for testing.*
  - *Your result will be ready in about a week and will be given to you either by text message, email or phone call.*
  - *The result of a DBS test showing HIV is not final and you will need a HIV blood test to confirm the result.*
  - *This test is available for men who have sex with men, people from countries where HIV is common, and for those with partners from these countries.*
  - *You must be over 16 years old and live in NSW to receive a DBS test.*

Slide 9 cont...



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Your doctor Sexual Health Clinics Family Planning Centres	**At a [Test] clinic**	**Self test kit ordered online and sent to your address**	**Register online and collect test kit from a vending machine**

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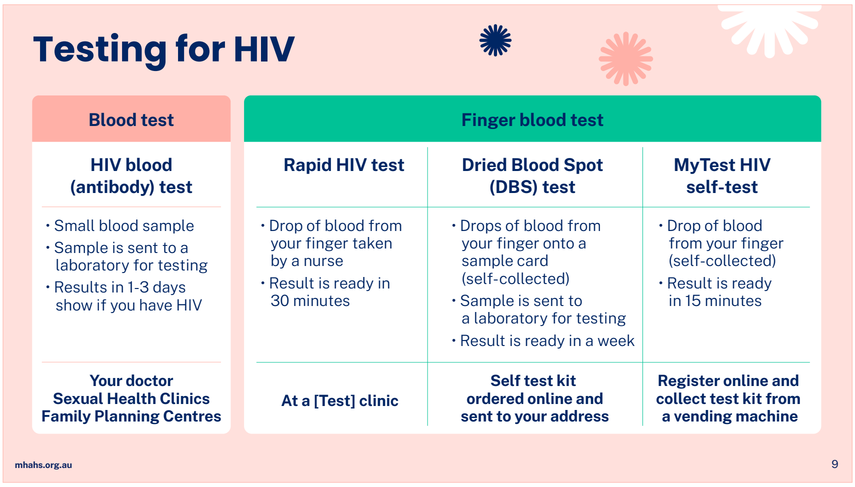
Facilitator notes:

- *The last option here on the slide is the* ***MyTest HIV self-test:***
  - *This is a free HIV self-test kit to people over 16 in NSW. You can order it online and collect it from a MyTest vending machine of your choice.*
  - *Like the other self-test, you prick your finger as instructed and place your blood drops inside a tube in a test.*
  - *It gives you the result in 15 minutes*
  - *The result of a MyTest HIV self-test showing HIV is not final and you will need a HIV blood test to confirm the result.*

So where do you get tested? We'll talk about the different places you can get tested.

1. *At Sexual Health Clinics*
   - *These are clinical settings, where a nurse will collect blood from your arm and send the sample to a laboratory.*
   - *Here, testing is free, and you don't need a Medicare card or even your real name if you prefer to remain anonymous.*
   - *It is also available for international students and temporary visitors.*
2. *Rapid HIV Testing Centres (A[TEST])*
   - *These are also clinical settings, where a nurse will take a small drop of blood by pricking your finger.*
   - *The sample doesn't go to a laboratory, and you'll get the results in 30 minutes.*
   - *These are also free services but only for men who have sex with men.*
3. *You can book online at* ***endinghiv.org.au***
4. *You do have the option to do the HIV test at home by ordering online the* ***Dried Blood Spot (DBS) Test****, or registering online for MyTest kit and collecting it from a vending machine. As we covered on last slide, these are a self-test options. You can get more information through:* ***health.nsw.gov.au/dbstest*** *and* ***mytest.health.nsw.gov.au***

Slide 9 cont...



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Blood test	Finger blood test		
HIV blood (antibody) test	**Rapid HIV test**	**Dried Blood Spot (DBS) test**	**MyTest HIV self-test**
• Small blood sample • Sample is sent to a laboratory for testing • Results in 1-3 days show if you have HIV	• Drop of blood from your finger taken by a nurse • Result is ready in 30 minutes	• Drops of blood from your finger onto a sample card (self-collected) • Sample is sent to a laboratory for testing • Result is ready in a week	• Drop of blood from your finger (self-collected) • Result is ready in 15 minutes
Your doctor Sexual Health Clinics Family Planning Centres	**At a [Test] clinic**	**Self test kit ordered online and sent to your address**	**Register online and collect test kit from a vending machine**

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Facilitator notes:

5. *Another option I have here today for you, is through **Family Planning Clinics***
    - *These are also clinical settings that offer sexual and reproductive health services, including HIV testing, STI treatment, contraception advice, and pregnancy support.*
    - *You may have to pay a fee to use their services.*
6. *You can also visit your **General Practitioner (GP) or doctor***
    - *Your regular GP/ doctor can organize an HIV blood test for you.*
    - *Just be aware that fees may apply if your doctor doesn't bulk bill. This means, you may have to pay something to your doctor and then you claim some money back from Medicare. If your doctor bulk bills, your visit is free because Medicare.*

So, whether you prefer a clinic, your GP, or do the test at home, there are many ways to get tested for HIV. The important thing is to find what works best for you — and to make testing a regular part of your health routine.

Explain about HIV window period if you have time:

- It's also important to understand the HIV window period. This is the time after you have been in contact with the virus that HIV may not show up on any test yet -even though the person has the virus.
- Most HIV tests can detect the virus within a few weeks, but if someone tests too soon, they might get a false negative result. That's why follow-up testing is sometimes recommended.
- If someone thinks they've been exposed to HIV recently, it's important to seek medical advice quickly. They may prescribe you with PEP (post-exposure prophylaxis) which is a medication that can help prevent HIV. It must be taken within 72 hours to work properly.

Slide 10

Who should get tested?

You should get tested if you:

- ✓ Are a man who has sex with other men
- ✓ Have had more than one sexual partner and you didn't always use a condom
- ✓ Have a partner who is living with HIV
- ✓ Have a partner who is living with HIV and want to have a baby
- ✓ Have ever shared needles or other equipment to inject drugs or steroids
- ✓ Have had injections, tattoos, piercings, dental or medical procedures overseas

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Facilitator notes:

So, you should get tested for HIV if you:

- *Are a man who has sex with other men – if you are part of this group you're at higher risk. It is recommended that sexually active men who have sex with men have a HIV test at least once a year.*
- *Have had more than one sexual partner and didn't always use a condom*
- *Have a partner living with HIV*
- *Are planning to have a baby with a partner who has HIV – talk to your doctor about it*
- *Have ever shared needles or equipment for injecting drugs, hormones, or steroids.*
- *Have had injections, tattoos, piercings, dental or medical procedures overseas.*

Testing is the only way to know your HIV status. And remember:

- *The earlier you know your HIV status the sooner you can start treatment.*
- *Early treatment helps people stay healthy and prevents HIV from being passed on to others.*

Before I move to the next slide, does anyone have any questions about who should get tested?

Slide 11

What is the treatment for HIV?

HIV is treated with medication called antiretrovirals (ARTs)

HIV treatments are very effective and lifelong

The earlier you start taking HIV treatments the better it is for your health

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11

Facilitator notes:

Now that we've covered testing, let's look at what treatment is available for HIV and how it helps people live long and healthy lives.

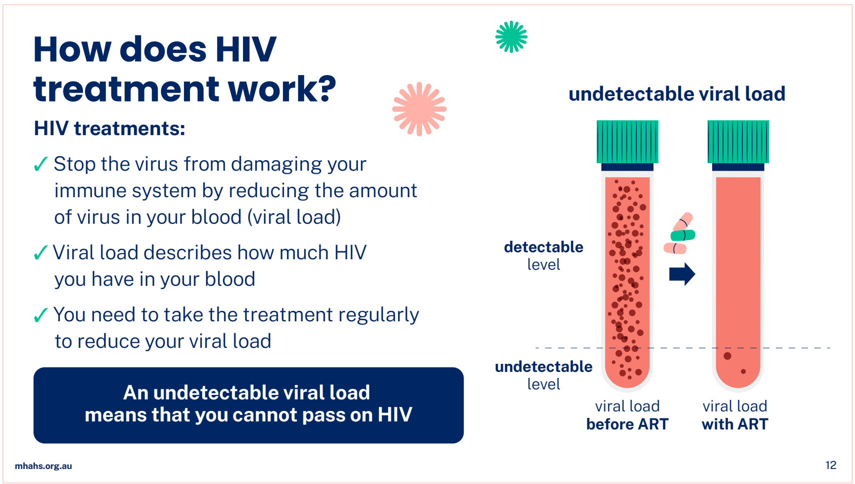
- *The treatment for HIV is called antiretroviral therapy (ART).*
- *ART isn't a cure, but it's a mix of medicines that stop the virus from multiplying in your blood, helping the immune system stay strong.*
- *This treatment is very effective and it's for life. People with HIV usually take ART one pill once a day. It's easy, safe and works well if taken every day.*
- *The early you start taking HIV treatment the better it is for your health.*

Important information for your group:

- *If any of your test results come back positive for HIV, speak to your doctor or a nurse from the NSW Sexual Health clinic about treatment as soon as possible.*
- *They will explain to you where to go and what you need to do.*
- *They connect you with support services like the Multicultural HIV and Hepatitis Service, NSW Sexual Health Infolink or Positive Life NSW. Details and contact for these services it on another slide.*
- *If someone tests positive for HIV, they should start HIV treatment as early as possible.*
- *Free and confidential support services are available, including support in your language.*

On the next slide, we'll talk in more detail how this treatment works

Slide 12



How does HIV treatment work?

HIV treatments:

- ✓ Stop the virus from damaging your immune system by reducing the amount of virus in your blood (viral load)
- ✓ Viral load describes how much HIV you have in your blood
- ✓ You need to take the treatment regularly to reduce your viral load

An undetectable viral load means that you cannot pass on HIV

undetectable viral load

detectable level

undetectable level

viral load **before ART**

viral load **with ART**

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12

Facilitator notes:

Now that we've talked about what HIV treatment is, let's go a bit deeper into how it works inside the body and why it's so important to take it consistently.

- *As I mentioned earlier, ART is the HIV treatment that stops the virus from damaging your immune system. It helps reduces the amount of virus in your body, also known as the viral load.*
- *Viral load tells the doctor how much HIV you have in your blood. If you take the HIV treatment as your doctor prescribed, it helps lower the viral load to undetectable levels.*
- *Having an undetectable level of virus in your body means that the amount of HIV in your body is so low that the virus cannot be detected by blood tests.*
- *It also means the treatment is working which improves your overall health.*
- *When you have an undetectable viral load, you cannot pass HIV on to other people.*
- *HIV treatment is effective and has few side-effects.*
- *It's also important not to miss any doses or stop ART. If you stop the treatment, the virus becomes resistant and starts to grow again inside your body, making the treatment less effective over time.*
- *A person with HIV can live a long and healthy life*

So, the key message is that HIV treatment works. It's safe, it's manageable, and it helps people with HIV live full, healthy lives while also protecting others

Slide 13

How can I protect myself from getting HIV?

✓ Condoms and water-based lubricant protect you and others from HIV

✓ PrEP (Pre-exposure prophylaxis) - HIV treatment to protect yourself from getting HIV

✓ PEP (Post-exposure prophylaxis) - HIV treatment you take after you may have come into contact with HIV to help protect you from getting it.

✓ Use clean equipment to inject drugs (don't share needles)

✓ Test regularly for HIV

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13

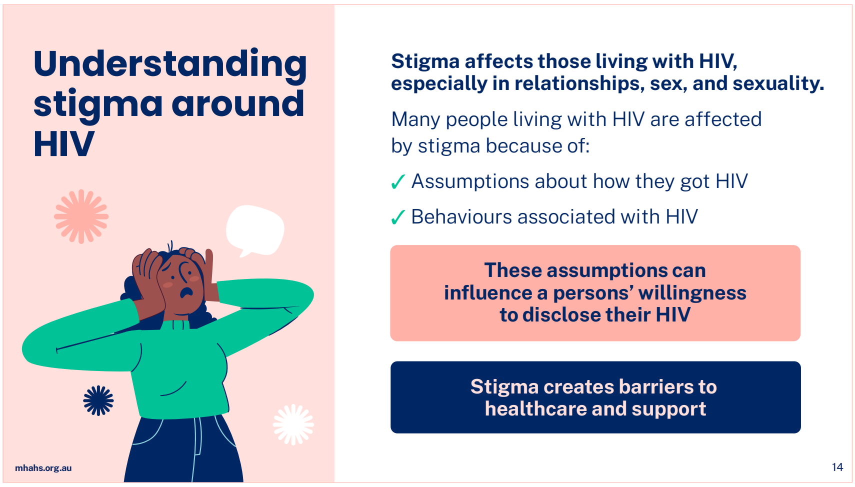
Facilitator notes:

Let's now look at the different ways you can protect yourself from getting HIV. The good news is, there are many effective ways to prevent HIV like new medications, safer practices and harm reduction.

- *You can use **condoms** with water-based lubricant to protect yourself and others from getting HIV and other STIs (sexually transmissible infections). Condoms create a barrier that protects you from infections that can be passed on during sex.*
- ***PrEP** or Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis is a medication to take before having sex to protect you from getting HIV.*
  - *It's for people who do not have HIV and are at higher risk, like men who have sex with men, sex workers, and people with HIV positive partners.*
  - *It works very well when taken consistently.*
  - *It's available through GPs and sexual health clinics in Australia.*
- ***PEP** or Post-Exposure Prophylaxis is a medication you take after sex to help protect you from getting HIV..*
  - *It's for people who think they may have been exposed to HIV*
  - *It's an emergency medication to be taken within 72 hours after possible HIV exposure.*
  - *It's available at hospitals, sexual health clinics and some GPs.*
- *Never share needles and always use clean equipment to inject drugs or steroids to protect yourself from getting HIV*
- *Regular HIV testing helps detect HIV early and connects people to treatment quickly, reducing the risk of transmission*

Preventing HIV is possible. With the tools we have today, like PrEP, PEP, condoms, treatment, and harm reduction — everyone can take control of their health and help protect their community.

Slide 14



Understanding stigma around HIV

Stigma affects those living with HIV, especially in relationships, sex, and sexuality.

Many people living with HIV are affected by stigma because of:

✓ Assumptions about how they got HIV

✓ Behaviours associated with HIV

These assumptions can influence a persons' willingness to disclose their HIV

Stigma creates barriers to healthcare and support

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14

Facilitator notes:

Let's now talk about HIV stigma and how it affects people living with HIV.

Activity:

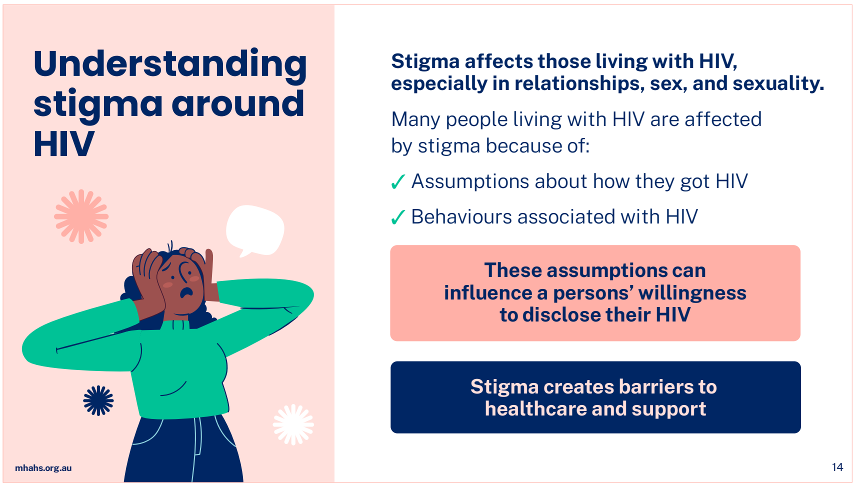
Ask participants: *Does anyone know what stigma is and what that causes to people with HIV?*

(Acknowledge everyone's answers)

Answer: *Stigma is a strong negative attitude or belief about someone or a group of people, often because of their health condition. Stigma can lead to unfair treatment or discrimination. Stigma often comes from misinformation or wrong assumptions about how someone got HIV and associate their HIV status to the way they behave. For example, believing that people get HIV because they have been involved in sex work, drug use, or same-sex relationships. These beliefs can be harmful and leads to exclusion and shame.*

- *Unfortunately, many people with HIV experience stigma and discrimination*
- *Stigma can have serious impacts on people's lives, including fear of discrimination, delay in getting tested or treated, and emotional distress, anxiety, and depression*
- *Some people are afraid to share meals or even be near someone with HIV because they mistakenly believe they could catch it.*
- *This misinformation can cause isolation and emotional distress for those living with the virus.*
- *It is important that we educate ourselves and others to break down these myths.*
- *If you know someone with HIV, you don't need to avoid them or change how you interact with them. Instead, support them to seek medical care and stay on top of their HIV.*
- *HIV is not spread through everyday casual contact like hugging, hand shaking or sharing food*

Slide 14 cont...



Understanding stigma around HIV

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Many people living with HIV are affected by stigma because of:

- ✓ Assumptions about how they got HIV
- ✓ Behaviours associated with HIV

These assumptions can influence a persons' willingness to disclose their HIV

Stigma creates barriers to healthcare and support

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Facilitator notes:

- *No one should feel ashamed or be treated unfairly for having HIV.*
- *We all should help reduce stigma and discrimination by creating a supportive environment for those living with HIV. It's about treating everyone with kindness, respect, and understanding.*
- *HIV stigma can have serious impacts. It can stop people from getting tested or starting treatment early. Some may hide their HIV status, leading to mental health struggles, isolation, or even delaying medical care. It creates a cycle that affects not only the person's physical health, but also their emotional and social well-being.*

Optional Group Activity:

Invite participants to reflect on this with a group discussion.
Divide them into small groups or keep it as one large group.

Ask participants: *How does HIV stigma affect a person's physical, emotional, and social life?*

After the discussion, ask each group to share one or two key points with everyone.

Allow a few people to share and gently acknowledge the responses and aim to include their cases/examples during the presentation.

So, how do we reduce stigma?

The key is education and open conversations. We need to challenge myths, use respectful language, and create environments where people feel safe to talk about HIV without fear. Reducing stigma helps make healthcare more accessible and communities more supportive.

Slide 15

Who to tell and not tell

In NSW, by law, you don't need to tell someone that you have HIV before having sex as long as you take 'reasonable precautions'

Reasonable precautions include:

- ✓ Using a condom
- ✓ Having an undetectable viral load (from being on HIV treatment)
- ✓ Making sure your sexual partner is taking PrEP

Ask your doctor about steps to protect you and your partners

Facilitator notes:

Let's now talk about the topic of disclosure. This means, when you must tell someone that you have HIV.

There are situations where you are legally required to disclose your HIV status.

- *In New South Wales, people living with HIV are not legally required to disclose their status to sexual partners, as long as they take reasonable precautions to prevent transmission. This means taking safety steps to stop harm or danger to other people, for example:*
  - *Using condoms correctly and consistently*
  - *Having an undetectable viral load (which means HIV cannot be passed on) by taking your HIV medication as your doctor prescribed*
  - *Making sure your partner is taking PrEP before sex as a prevention from getting HIV (speak to your doctor or nurse what the best ways for you to use PrEP)*

  It's important to speak with your doctor about what "reasonable precautions" mean for your individual case. Your doctor can give the advice you need to ensure both you and your partners are protected.

- *While disclosure isn't required by law in these cases, some people may choose to share their status:*
  - *To build trust in relationships*
  - *To access support from friends, family, or healthcare providers*
  - *Or to feel emotionally supported and empowered*
- *You might consider telling your sexual partner your doctor, or a close friend or family member that you have HIV. But this decision is personal, and you should always feel safe and supported.*

If you'd like more detailed information on the legal aspects or have specific questions, NSW Health has resources available to help you clarify these guidelines. You can find these resources on the NSW Health website.

Slide 16

Where to get help

Multicultural HIV and Hepatitis Service
www.mhahs.org.au | (02) 9515 1234 | Forest Lodge

ACON
www.acon.org.au | 1800 063 060 | Surry Hills
(02) 4962 7700 | Newcastle | (02) 6622 1555 | Lismore

Positive Life NSW
www.positivelife.org.au | 1800 245 677 | Surry Hills

Pozhet (Heterosexual HIV Service NSW) www.pozhet.org.au

Sexual Health InfoLink
www.shil.nsw.gov.au | 1800 451 624

Bobby Goldsmith Foundation (BGF)
www.bgf.org.au | (02) 9283 8666 | Darlinghurst and Parramatta

HIV/AIDS Legal Centre (HALC)
www.halc.org.au | (02) 9492 6540 | Surry Hills

Sex Workers Outreach Project | www.swop.org.au | (02) 9184 9466

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Facilitator notes:

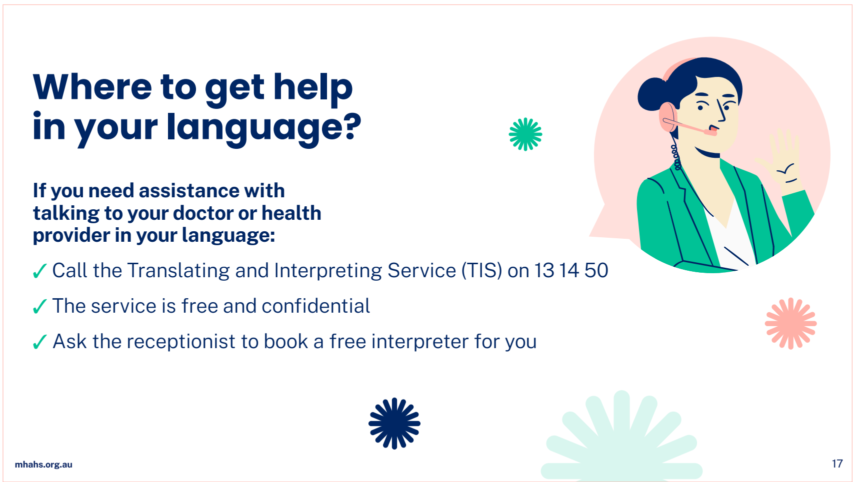
We have covered a lot of important information about HIV today. This slide shows you where you can get help if you or someone you know are living with HIV or if you just want some more information about HIV.

- *The Multicultural HIV and Hepatitis Service or MHAHS has translated materials for you or someone you know about HIV. MHAHs offers a free service called HIV Clinical Concierge Program that helps clients from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds who have received a diagnosis of HIV.*
- *ACON helps LGBTQ communities take control of their health so they can look after themselves as well as their partners, family and friends. They offer a range of services including sexual health, mental health, alcohol and other drugs, safety and inclusion, domestic and family violence and ageing.*
- *Positive Life NSW helps people living with HIV in NSW. They provide free information, advocacy, referral and advice on issues relevant to people with HIV.*
- *Pozhet provides support, information, events and referrals for heterosexual people living with HIV in NSW.*
- *Sexual Health InfoLink is a free, confidential and non-judgemental telephone service for information on HIV. You can call and ask them about HIV testing options and advice on HIV prevention and treatment. Call the NSW Sexual Health Infolink on 1800 451 624 to find your closest sexual health service.*
- *Bobby Goldsmith Foundation (BGF) helps with things like finances, housing, or navigating healthcare.*
- *HIV/AIDS Legal Centre (HALC) offers free legal help.*

Reach out to these services to help you manage your health and get the support you need. The most important steps are getting tested, treated and staying informed.

Does anyone have any questions before we move on?

Slide 17



Where to get help in your language?

If you need assistance with talking to your doctor or health provider in your language:

- ✓ Call the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) on 13 14 50
- ✓ The service is free and confidential
- ✓ Ask the receptionist to book a free interpreter for you

Facilitator notes:

We know that talking about health can be difficult, and even more so if English isn't your first language. So, if you or someone you know does not speak English, you still have full access to health services in Australia.

- *You can use the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) to speak to a healthcare provider in your own language. Just call **13 14 50** and ask for an interpreter.*
- *This service is free, confidential, and available 24/7 in over 160 languages.*
- *You can ask for an interpreter. The receptionist can organise it for you. You don't have to pay.*
- *TIS can help you book appointments to talk to your GP or specialist*

Save the number or take a photo of the slide for future use.

Slide 18

What have we learnt today?

True or False

1. You can get HIV from sharing a toilet with someone who has HIV.

2. HIV can be transmitted through mosquito bites.

3. A person with HIV who has an undetectable viral load cannot pass on the virus.

4. You can get HIV from kissing someone who is HIV positive.

5. People with HIV who are on treatment can live long, healthy lives.

6. HIV can be prevented by using condoms or taking PrEP.

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18

Facilitator notes:

Now, let's see how much we've learnt today from this workshop.

There are a lot of myths out there in community about how HIV is passed on, and these myths can create fear, stigma, and discrimination.

Let's take a quick quiz to test what we know and what we've learned from today's session, so we can avoid these myths in our community.

I will read out these statements and I want you to raise your hand and tell me out loud if they are TRUE or FALSE.

This is just for fun. The goal is to see what you have learnt from today's session. Let's get started

True or False:

1. *You can get HIV from sharing a toilet with someone who has HIV:*

   Answer: *False.*

   Explanation: *HIV cannot survive outside the body, so it can't be spread by surfaces like toilet seats.*

2. *HIV can be transmitted through mosquito bites:*

   Answer: *False*

   Explanation: *HIV does not live or reproduce in insects, so it cannot be transmitted by mosquito bites*

3. *A person with HIV who has an undetectable viral load (so little HIV in the blood that is not detectable) cannot transmit the virus:*

   Answer: *True*

   Explanation: *Effective HIV treatment reduces the viral load to undetectable levels, meaning the virus cannot be transmitted to others (U=U, or Undetectable = Untransmittable).*

Slide 18 cont...

What have we learnt today?

True or False

1. You can get HIV from sharing a toilet with someone who has HIV.

2. HIV can be transmitted through mosquito bites.

3. A person with HIV who has an undetectable viral load cannot pass on the virus.

4. You can get HIV from kissing someone who is HIV positive.

5. People with HIV who are on treatment can live long, healthy lives.

6. HIV can be prevented by using condoms or taking PrEP.

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18

Facilitator notes:

True or False:

4. *You can get HIV from kissing someone who is HIV positive:*

   Answer: *False*

   Explanation: *HIV is not transmitted through saliva alone. Only certain fluids like blood, semen and vaginal fluids can transmit HIV under specific conditions.*

5. *People with HIV who are on treatment can live long, healthy lives:*

   Answer: *True*

   Explanation: *With effective treatment, HIV can be managed like many chronic conditions, allowing people to live long, healthy lives.*

6. *HIV can be prevented by using condoms or taking PrEP:*

   Answer: *True*

   Explanation: *Condoms are a barrier method, and PrEP is a daily pill that prevents HIV. Both ARE effective in reducing the risk of transmission.*

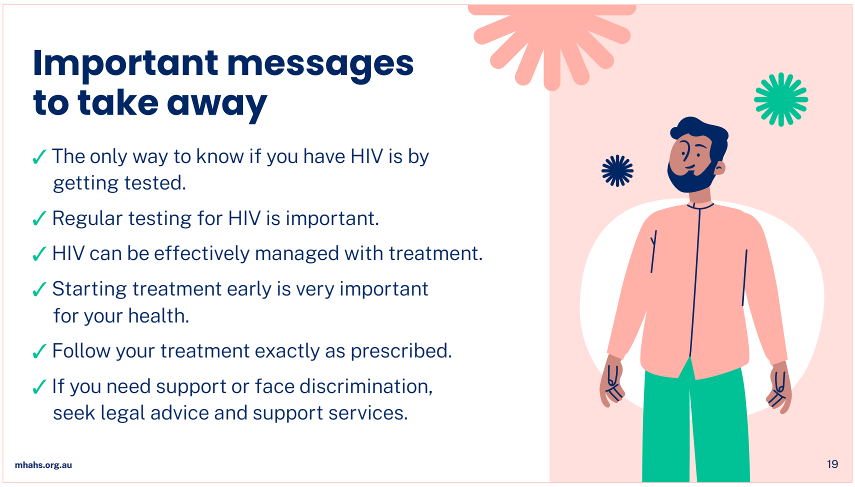
Discussion prompts:

- Ask participants what surprised them the most.
- Discuss the importance of understanding these facts to support people living with HIV and reduce stigma.
- Encourage participants to think about how they can use this knowledge to educate others and avoid using those myths in their communities.

That was great! Thank you for participating in the quiz. Does anyone have any other questions about HIV? Please, feel free to ask me before we finish this session today.

Let's move on to our final slide.

Slide 19



Important messages to take away

- ✓ The only way to know if you have HIV is by getting tested.
- ✓ Regular testing for HIV is important.
- ✓ HIV can be effectively managed with treatment.
- ✓ Starting treatment early is very important for your health.
- ✓ Follow your treatment exactly as prescribed.
- ✓ If you need support or face discrimination, seek legal advice and support services.

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Facilitator notes:

To wrap up, here are some key messages to remember.

- *First, the only way to know if you have HIV is by getting tested.*
- *Have a regular health check-up with your doctor and remember to also ask to test for HIV and other STIs.*
- *HIV can be managed well with the right treatment. It helps people with HIV live healthy lives. It's important to start HIV treatment as soon as possible after diagnosis, so you can keep your viral load low and prevent from getting sick.*
- *When you start treatment, be sure to follow your doctor's instructions closely and take your medication exactly as prescribed. This will help keep the virus under control and maintain your health.*
- *Finally, if you need support or ever feel discriminated against, know that there are resources to help. Legal advice and support services are available to ensure you're treated fairly and receive the support you need.*

Thank you very much for attending this session today and please let me know if you have any questions or any resources on HIV.

Slide 20

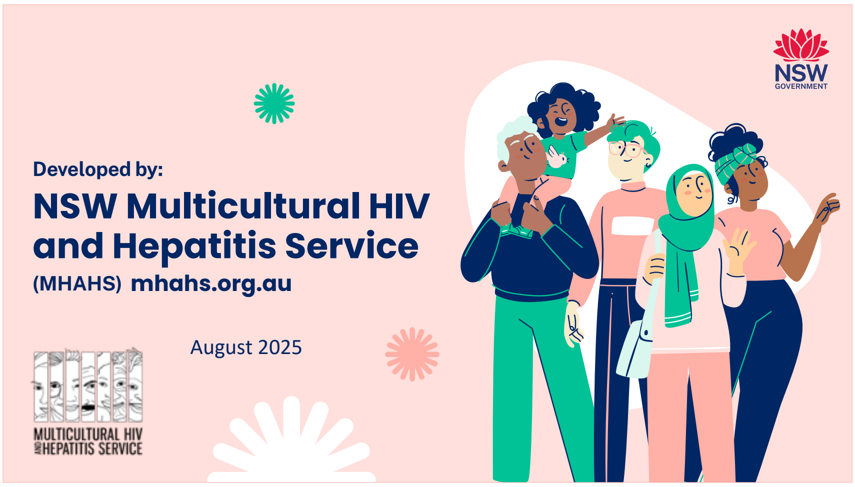
Questions?

Facilitator notes:

Are there any final questions?

Thank you everyone. We hope that you can take some of the information you learnt today and pass it on to your communities.

Slide 21



Developed by:

NSW Multicultural HIV and Hepatitis Service

(MHAHS) **mhahs.org.au**

August 2025

The MHAHS supports people from diverse cultural and language backgrounds across New South Wales to address HIV, hepatitis B, hepatitis C, and sexual health. It works with communities to provide information, education, and support to improve access to health care for all.

The MHAHS also partners with health services and community organisations to provide culturally tailored health education and multilingual programs to empower communities with knowledge and tools they need to navigate the health care system confidently.

Email: info@mhahs.org.au

Website – multilingual information on HIV, hepatitis B and C, STIs and liver health

Sample Evaluation Form

Topic ....

Date ....

Language ....

Age ....

Gender ....

1. Did the speaker explain things in a way you could understand?

☐ Yes, always ☐ Yes, sometimes ☐ No

2. Did you feel you were treated with respect and dignity (e.g. with courtesy, care and kindness) while you were in the session?

☐ Yes, always ☐ Yes, sometimes ☐ No

3. Would you recommend this session to a friend or family?

☐ Yes ☐ No

4. What is one thing you have learnt from this session?

....

....

....

....

5. Do you have any comments or suggestions?

....

....

....

....

Glossary

AIDS: AIDS: Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome: A group of illnesses of the immune system caused by the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). There is no vaccine and no cure.

Antibody: something that your immune system makes to fight things that are not normally part of the body, like viruses, germs. The body can remember some antibodies and that helps keep us protected from infection.

Antiretroviral treatment therapy (ART): is the HIV treatment. It uses a combination of different drugs for ongoing treatment of people living with HIV.

Blood-borne: It refers to diseases or infections that can pass from one person to another through blood, like hepatitis B and C. These infections can spread also through things like sharing needles, blood transfusions, cuts and wounds coming into contact with infected blood.

Blood-to-blood contact: it happens when the blood from one person mixes with the blood of another person. It can spread blood-borne diseases like hepatitis B and C, HIV.

Bulk billing: if your doctor bulk bills, your visit is free because Medicare pays the doctor. If your doctor does not bulk bill, you pay the doctor and then you claim some money back from Medicare.

Cell: The smallest part of a human body. The body is made of millions of cells. Alone each cell is too small to be seen.

Chronic: a disease or symptom that lasts for a long time, usually months or years, and often doesn't go away completely.

Condoms: a thin rubber (latex) bag which fits on a man's erect penis to stop pregnancy, and reduce the chance of passing on sexually transmissible infections (STIs) or viruses.

Confidentiality: means keeping personal information private and not sharing it without permission. Medical confidentiality means anything you tell your doctor or nurse must, by law, be kept private between the two of you and the organisation they work for.

Consent: means to 'agree' to something. Another word for consent is 'permission'. When a person agrees to do something without anyone forcing them to do it, they are consenting to it. It's, for example, when a patient agrees to a medical procedure, treatment, or test after being explained what it involves.

Diagnosis: the conclusion a doctor may reach after examining, doing tests and talking with their patients.

Diarrhea: is when you have frequent, loose, or watery stools three or more times a day. It usually lasts for a short time, but it can be persistent, lasting a long time. It can be caused by infections or certain food or medications.

Glossary

Discrimination: Treating someone unfairly because they are different (immigrants, women, persons living with HIV/ AIDS or persons with a disability). In Australia many types of discrimination are against the law.

Hepatitis: An inflammation of the liver due to viruses or drug or alcohol use.

HIV: The Human Immunodeficiency Virus which can cause AIDS.

HIV+ or HIV positive: A person becomes HIV positive when they have been infected with HIV. The word 'positive' is used because testing the blood shows that HIV is in their body. A negative test would be one where the virus was not shown to be present.

Immune system: The body's system for fighting infections and disease. HIV destroys part of the immune system so that a person with HIV is less able to fight off infections.

Infection: a sickness you get from germs. Infections can be caused by viruses, bacteria, fungi and parasites.

Inflammation: when there is inflammation in your body, you might see a change in the skin colour or a swelling. It happens when your body tries to heal or fight off bacteria and viruses.

Liver: the largest organ inside your body. It helps to digest food, store energy, and remove poisons from your body.

Lube or lubricant: A slippery liquid. When talking about safe sex a lubricant is a slippery water-based liquid (jelly) that should be used with a condom to stop the condom ripping or tearing.

Medication: is a drug or medicine used to treat diseases and other health conditions.

Semen or sperm: The liquid which comes out of the penis during sex when a man is very sexually excited.

STI: means Sexually Transmissible Infection - A disease which can be passed from one person to another during sex. HIV is an STI, but it can be passed through blood to blood contact and from mother to child during pregnancy, childbirth or from breast milk.

Side effect: a possible negative reaction to medication or treatment.

Symptom: a sign of disease or sickness. It's something that is different in your body that might mean you have sickness. Symptoms help doctors and nurses work out what the sickness is.

Test: A way of finding an illness by taking blood or body fluids from a person and carefully looking at them.

Transmission: the passing of a disease from one person to another.

Treatment: something that a person does so that they can stay healthy or get better. It can involve taking medicine, or other therapy to treat or cure a disease, and/or change in lifestyle.

Glossary

Unprotected sex: Having sex without using condoms or dams.

Unsterile: something that is not clean or free of germs, bacteria, or viruses.

Vaccine: a shot that protects you from certain diseases like hepatitis B or Mpox. Also called immunization. Vaccines make our immunity stronger.

Vaginal fluid: The natural lubricant inside the vagina.

Viral load: The amount of a virus (for example, HIV or hepatitis C) that is found in a person’s blood if they are infected with that virus.

Virus: it is a type of germ (microbe, micro-organism) that can cause infection and make you sick which antibiotics cannot fight. Monkeypox, HIV and hepatitis A, B and C are viruses.

Links to further information and resources

These are links to websites you can use to find more information on HIV:

Multicultural HIV and Hepatitis Service (MHAHS) works with CALD communities in NSW to improve health and wellbeing in relation to HIV, hepatitis B, hepatitis C and sexual health. MHAHS works with 20 language groups to implement a range of health promotion, community development and media initiatives.

www.mhahs.org.au

Sexual Health Infolink is a statewide, nurse led, NSW Health Service. They provide the public with information on HIV, hepatitis and STIs, PrEP and PEP, where to get tested and support for complex contact tracing.

www.shil.nsw.gov.au/

ASHM provides support to the HIV, viral hepatitis and sexual health workforce. The website includes up to date information on HIV, hepatitis and sexual health.

www.ashm.org.au

Healthdirect Australia is a national virtual health information service.

www.healthdirect.gov.au

NSW Health is the umbrella organisation that funds and supports Local Health Districts and other NSW Health government organisations.

https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/infectious/factsheets/

CDC is an American organisation with a sophisticated website that has accurate and up to date health information on a variety of health topics

https://www.cdc.gov

ACON is a community based organisation that works with a diverse range of people to provide support and education around issues relating to HIV and sexual health.

www.acon.org.au/

www.endinghiv.org.au/

Family Planning Australia is a statewide community organisation that provides face to face healthcare and an extensive health promotion service on a range of health topics. The FPNSW website has factsheets and various resources in multilingual languages.

www.fpnsw.org.au

Positive Life NSW works with people living with HIV in NSW and provides them with information, referral and advice on all relevant issues.

www.positivelife.org.au

Links to further information and resources

Pozhet provides support, information and advice to heterosexuals at risk of HIV, heterosexuals living with HIV and health care professionals in NSW.

www.pozhet.org.au

The HIV AIDS Legal Centre (HALC) is a not-for-profit specialist community legal centre that provides free and comprehensive legal assistance to people with HIV or hepatitis-related legal matters.

www.halc.org.au/

Translating and Interpreters Service (TIS) is a national interpreting services for people with limited English proficiency and for agencies and businesses that need to communicate with their non-English speaking clients.

www.tisnational.gov.au/

The National Association of People with HIV Australia (NAPWHA) provides advocacy, policy and health promotions on a range of health and education initiatives.

www.napwha.org.au

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

These are some of the common questions that people from CALD backgrounds may have about HIV which may have not been covered in the content of this education session.

What is the HIV window period?

It is the time between infection and when HIV can be reliably detected from a test. It takes time for HIV to be detected in the body by a test. Most people will test positive for HIV within 1 month after exposure, and small number of people may take up to 3 months.

Can I get HIV from oral sex?

There is a very low risk of HIV transmission through oral sex. The risk is still considered low even if there is ejaculation in the mouth and cuts and sores are present.

Is using two condoms better than one?

No, it's not. Using any type of two condoms at the same time will increase the risk of the condom breaking and is not effective. Using one condom with water-based lubricant is all you need to have safe and healthy sex life. You can get condoms from your local supermarket, chemist and at most university health clinics.

Does pulling out before ejaculating mean I can't HIV or an STI?

No, it doesn't. The withdrawal method is when the penis is removed from the vagina before ejaculation occurs. It is not a reliable form of contraception and does not provide protection from STIs. Condoms are the best protection against unplanned pregnancy and STIs.

Can I catch an STI or HIV from a public toilet?

You cannot get an STI or HIV from using any toilet, or from kissing, hugging and sharing foods. STIs are passed on from a person with an infection to another often through sex without a condom.

Can I tell if someone has an STI or HIV by looking at them?

No. You cannot tell if someone has an STI or HIV by looking at them. Get tested regularly and use condoms for the best protection

How long do I need to be on treatment before my viral load becomes undetectable?

Over 90% of people on treatment will have an undetectable viral load within 3 to 6 months of starting treatment, or even earlier for some.

Do we need to use condoms with someone who is HIV positive and has an undetectable viral load?

It's always important to consider using condoms with sexual partners, including casual sex partners. While the viral load may be undetectable, you may want to consider other things, such as the possibility of STI transmission or when his last viral load test was. It's smart for both of you to consider and discuss these things so you can get on with having fun.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

If my viral load is undetectable, can I stop taking my meds?

No. Remaining on and adhering to treatment is the key to staying undetectable and stopping the virus from replicating (making more copies of itself) inside your body. If you stop taking your meds, then HIV will resume its impact on your immune system, your health may deteriorate, and your risk of passing on HIV dramatically increases

What are the side effects of PreP?

Some people may show some side effects, and they can be: nausea, dizziness, headaches, tiredness, stomach cramps, and diarrhoea.

What is the cost of HIV treatment in NSW?

People living with HIV in NSW can access HIV treatment for free regardless of their Medicare status.

Can I get HIV from mosquito bites?

No, HIV cannot be transmitted through mosquito bites. HIV is a human virus that does not survive or reproduce inside insects.

Can I get HIV from sharing food, drinks, or utensils with someone who has HIV?

No, HIV is not transmitted through saliva, food, drinks, or utensils. It is only transmitted through blood, semen, vaginal fluids, breast milk, and rectal fluids.

How often should I get tested for STIs and HIV?

If you are sexually active, it is recommended to get tested at least once a year. If you have multiple partners, engage in unprotected sex, or share injecting equipment, you may need testing more frequently (every 3-6 months).

Do all STIs have symptoms?

No, many STIs do not show symptoms, which is why regular testing is important. Chlamydia, gonorrhea, and even HIV can be asymptomatic for a long time.

Can you get HIV from deep kissing?

The risk of HIV transmission from deep kissing is extremely low unless both partners have open sores or bleeding gums. Saliva itself does not transmit HIV.

Can HIV be cured?

Currently, there is no cure for HIV, but it can be managed with treatment (ART), which allows people with HIV to live long and healthy lives.

What should I do if I had unprotected sex and I'm worried about HIV?

If you had unprotected sex with someone whose HIV status is unknown, you can take PEP (Post-Exposure Prophylaxis) within 72 hours to reduce the risk of infection. Contact a doctor or sexual health clinic immediately.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is the difference between PrEP and PEP?

PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis) is a daily pill taken before exposure to reduce the risk of HIV.

PEP (Post-Exposure Prophylaxis) is a treatment taken after potential exposure (within 72 hours) to prevent HIV infection.

Can I take PrEP if I'm a woman?

Yes, PrEP is effective for both men and women. It reduces the risk of HIV transmission from vaginal, anal, and oral sex.

Is PrEP effective against all STIs?

No, PrEP only protects against HIV. It does not prevent other STIs such as chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, or herpes, so it's still important to use condoms.

Can HIV be transmitted through saliva, sweat, or tears?

No, HIV is not spread through saliva, sweat, tears, or casual contact such as hugging, handshakes, or sharing towels.

Can I still have children if I have HIV?

Yes, people with HIV can safely have children. With the right treatment and medical support, the risk of transmission to the baby is extremely low.