



HIV / AIDS

WHAT ARE THE RISKS

AND WHAT'S SAFE

INFORMATION FOR WOMEN

AIDS IS A DANGEROUS DISEASE... and it is still incurable. AIDS has spread all over the world, and it is also a serious problem in Switzerland.

AIDS is the result of an infection with the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (known as **HIV**). If you are infected with HIV, your immune system – the body's ability to defend itself against disease – weakens over the years. There comes a time when your body is no longer able to fight off many illnesses. You get sick, then sicker. This condition is what we call AIDS.

PROTECTION: This leaflet shows you where you are at risk of becoming infected with HIV. And how you and your partner(s) can protect yourselves effectively against HIV/AIDS!

AIDS IS INCURABLE... but there are medicines which slow down the course of an HIV infection. In Switzerland, everybody – no matter what their residence status – has the right to effective medical treatment. HIV treatment works best when it is started at the right time. If you don't know you are infected, you miss the best time to begin. So it's important to find out whether you are infected with HIV or not. For more information see overleaf.



RISKS

HIV is transmitted during sexual contact without a condom. A condom (or the Femidom®*) gives you the best protection against HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases in any sexual contact.

ANAL SEX WITHOUT A CONDOM



●●● Very high risk

for woman and man, with or without ejaculation

■ Protect yourself:

Use a condom and enough lubricant

VAGINAL SEX WITHOUT A CONDOM



●●○ High risk

for woman and man, with or without ejaculation

■ **Protect yourself:** Use a condom (or a Femidom®*)

ORAL SEX WITHOUT PROTECTION



●○○ Potential risk

■ **Protect yourself:** Avoid semen in your mouth!

Avoid swallowing semen!

Avoid having oral sex with a woman during her period.

(* For information on the Femidom®, the condom for women, see overleaf.)

USING A CONDOM

It helps if you, as a woman, know how a condom is used. You should also make sure you have some available in case your partner hasn't got any. Only use condoms with the «ok» quality stamp and in the right size. Available in supermarkets, drugstores and pharmacies or at www.mysize.ch.

1. Make sure the package is intact.



2. Open the package carefully by tearing along the perforated line; take the condom out.

3. Pull back the foreskin (unless your partner is circumcised).



4. Hold the rolled up condom by the reservoir end between your thumb and index finger and place it on the tip of the erect penis. The ring at the base of the condom should be on the outside.



5. Unroll the condom over the penis. It should unroll smoothly and easily. If there is any difficulty, the condom is probably too big or too small, or you've put it on the wrong way round (with the ring on the inside).



6. After ejaculation and before the penis softens, hold the condom firmly in place at the base (if the man doesn't do this himself) and ease the penis out.

OTHER MEANS OF TRANSMITTING HIV

FROM AN INFECTED MOTHER TO HER CHILD



An infected mother can pass HIV on to her child during pregnancy, labour and delivery or breastfeeding.

●●● Very high risk

■ **Protection:** 1) Medication and HIV treatment for pregnant women; 2) Caesarian section; 3) Formula feeding rather than breastfeeding

If you are already pregnant or you want to become pregnant, make sure that you seek advice on HIV/Aids and have an HIV test. This can prevent your child from becoming infected.

INJECTING DRUGS



HIV can be transmitted by drug users sharing syringes and needles.

●●● Very high risk

■ **Protect yourself:** Use sterile injecting equipment (syringes, needles, filters, cotton wool, spoon, water); don't share injecting equipment with other users. If you don't take these precautions, you additionally run a high risk of getting infected with the hepatitis C virus (HCV), which is also very dangerous.

SURGERY/CIRCUMCISIONS

●●● Very high risk

If the equipment (syringe, knife, needle....) used in surgery and in circumcisions, tattooing, etc. is not sterile and is used on different people, there is a chance that HIV may be transmitted. HIV can also be transmitted through a blood transfusion if the blood has not been screened.

○○○ No risk

In Switzerland, there are no cases of HIV being transmitted through surgical treatment carried out by recognised medical practitioners.

NO RISK FROM



Using workplace toilets and washrooms



Sneezing, coughing



Shaking hands, stroking
Hugging



Eating from the same plate
Drinking from the same glass



Insect bites
Swimming pools, saunas

This list shows that there is **no risk of transmitting or becoming infected with HIV in everyday contact**. There is no reason to be afraid of people infected with HIV/Aids or to exclude them from society.

No risk either from:



Kissing or mutual masturbation
Protected sex (with a condom)

OTHER SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES

Apart from HIV/Aids, sexual intercourse can result in the transmission of other diseases, e.g. gonorrhoea, herpes, syphilis, chlamydia or hepatitis B.

SYMPTOMS AND COMPLAINTS - → SEE A DOCTOR!

These diseases often cause certain complaints.

- Unusual, often strongly smelling discharge from the vagina
- Itching, small blisters, ulcerations, or sores on the labia or in the vagina; inflammation in the genital area
- Pain and burning sensation when urinating
- Pain or burning sensation during sexual intercourse
- Bright red palate or throat
- Bleeding between monthly periods; irregular menstruation
- Pains in the lower abdomen
- Problems with bowel movements
- Dull pain in the rectum, discharge from the rectum
- Ulcerations, small blisters on the anus

If you have any of these symptoms, go to the doctor immediately!

Note: HIV infection does not cause these symptoms! The only way to find out if you are infected is to go for a test.

CONSEQUENCES

If recognised in time, many of these diseases can be cured. Left untreated, they can have severe consequences (e.g. cancer, infertility), and they seriously increase the risk of becoming infected with HIV.

PROTECT YOURSELF: BY USING A CONDOM

A condom gives the best protection from these diseases during vaginal and anal intercourse, as well as for oral sex. The Femidom® gives protection during vaginal intercourse.

INFORMATION ON THE FEMIDOM®

If you can't persuade your partner to use a condom, try the Femidom®. Many men have less difficulty with a Femidom® than with a condom.

The Femidom® is a condom for women. It is inserted in the vagina before sexual intercourse – several hours before if necessary. Like the condom, it acts as a contraceptive device (against pregnancy) and protects both partners from infection with HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

At the beginning, many women find the Femidom® rather strange, but most get used to it after a while.

You can buy the Femidom® and get information/advice on how to use it from drugstores and pharmacies. Or you can order one from www.shop.aids.ch at a special price.

INFORMATION ON CONDOMS AND LUBRICANTS

EXPIRY DATE / STORING CONDOMS

Do not use condoms which have passed their expiry date (see date on package). – Keep condoms away from direct light and sharp objects.

LUBRICANTS

If necessary, use generous amounts of water-based lubricant (gel which makes penetration easier), available in supermarkets, drugstores and pharmacies. Never use Vaseline, body lotion, massage oil or cooking oil.

WHAT CAN I DO IF...

a condom bursts or tears and my partner is definitely or very likely HIV positive? If you go to an AIDS support organisation or a hospital the very next day at the latest, specialists can tell you what you can do. There is a real chance of stopping the infection, but there is no simple, guaranteed treatment in this situation.

BE RESPONSIBLE!

Women are strong and can take responsibility. – Men are not always faithful. If you have the slightest doubt about your partner's fidelity, talk to him about the problem and insist on using condoms (or the Femidom®) for sexual intercourse. Go for an HIV test together.

The risk of becoming infected as a result of unprotected sex is even greater for women than for men. The condom (or the Femidom®) protects both you and the people you have sex with.

NOTE

If you have always had sex without a condom and haven't become infected, then you have just been incredibly lucky. **There is still a very high risk of infection every time you have sexual intercourse without a condom!**

SEXUAL INTERCOURSE WITHOUT A CONDOM IS ONLY SAFE UNDER ALL THREE OF THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS:

- You are in a long-term relationship
- You and your partner have sex only with each other
- You have both had an HIV test (preferably together), which shows that you are not infected with the HIV virus

Is this the situation in your case? Are you absolutely sure?

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MORE INFORMATION AND COUNSELLING

COUNSELLING

At any AIDS support organisation: Call or drop in. If you want, you can receive counselling without having to give your name.

From a doctor: Don't hesitate to ask a doctor questions about HIV/Aids. Doctors are bound to observe confidentiality. Doctors are not allowed to pass on information about what you say or the results of an examination to anybody at all – including your partner, the immigration authorities, your employer, asylum reception/transit centre staff, community home staff, prison staff, etc.

LANGUAGE PROBLEMS

Find out the languages in which counselling is available. You may have to bring with you someone who can translate/interpret for you. (Information on suitable translators/interpreters under www.eka-cfe.ch/d/Doku/vermittlungsstellen.pdf or from an AIDS support organisation)

MORE INFORMATION

«Couple – Contraception – Aids – Rights – Pregnancy»:

Detailed information on all aspects of contraception.

Copies of this leaflet or other leaflets are available from:

Swiss AIDS Federation, Postfach 1118, 8031 Zurich

To order: phone 044 447 11 13, fax 044 447 11 14

e-mail shop@aids.ch, or go to www.shop.aids.ch

For other information: phone 044 447 11 11, fax 044 447 11 12

e-mail aids@aids.ch, or go to www.aids.ch

Ask an AIDS support organisation for information leaflets in your language, or go to **www.migesplus.ch**

This leaflet is available in the following languages:

albanisch, albanais, albanese, Albanian	russisch, russe, russo, Russian
amharisch, amharique, amarico, Amharic	serbisch/kroatisch/bosnisch, serbe/croate/bosniaque,
arabisch, arabe, arabo, Arabic	serbo/croato/bosniaco, Serbian/Croatian/Bosnian
deutsch, allemand, tedesco, German	somalisch, somalien, somalo, Somali
anglais, anglais, inglese, English	spanisch, espagnol, spagnolo, Spanish
französisch, français, francese, French	suaheli, swahili, swahili, Swahili
italienisch, italien, italiano, Italian	tamilisch, tamoul, tamil, Tamil
portugiesisch, portugais, portuguese, Portuguese	thai, thai, thai, Thai
rumänisch, roumain, rumeno, Romanian	türkisch, turc, turco, Turkish

HAVE I BECOME INFECTED?

If you don't find out that you are infected with HIV early enough, you miss the best time to start HIV treatment.

HIV TEST

You can only find out if you have become infected with HIV by taking an HIV test. At the beginning of an HIV infection, there may be no symptoms or health problems at all. There are no clear indications of an early HIV infection. You can't tell if someone has recently become infected just from looking at them.

As a rule, you should get tested three months after your last exposure to risk (e.g. sexual intercourse without a condom). This three-month 'window period' is always necessary to obtain a reliable result. But if you are infected with HIV, you can pass the virus on to other people even during these three months.

If the test result is «HIV negative», you have not become infected with the virus that causes AIDS. If the result is «HIV positive», it means that you have an HIV infection.

NOBODY NEEDS TO KNOW

You can take the test in major hospitals or directly in laboratories without having to give your name. This means that nobody can find out if you have gone to get tested or what the result is.

COUNSELLING BEFORE THE TEST

Before you go for the test, be sure to seek counselling at an AIDS support organisation, hospital or laboratory, or from your doctor. Or talk to your asylum case worker.

For (anonymous) information on addresses, fact sheets, test centres, etc. and to order materials, contact: **044 447 11 11 / www.aids.ch**

Or directly at: