

Tackling Tough Topics - AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Read the *Pastoral Letter on HIV/AIDS: The Fullness of Life*
at <http://www.adw.org/home.html>

Terms To Clarify

- HIV** - **Human Immunodeficiency Virus**, the virus that causes AIDS. A person may be infected with HIV for many years before they develop AIDS.
- AIDS** - **Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome**, the HIV virus gradually weakens the immune system until it cannot protect the person from diseases or infections.
- STD** - **Sexually Transmitted Disease**, (gonorrhea, chlamydia, syphilis, genital herpes, genital warts)
 - infections transmitted through sexual contact - vaginal, oral or anal.

STD Facts

- There are more than 55 STDs, including HIV.
- Infection with an STD increases 3 to 5 times the risk of HIV infection.
- One in four sexually exposed teens are infected with an STD.
- A person can get a disease from having sex even if it is the first time.
- 75% of infected women have no symptoms
- 50% of infected men have no symptoms
- STDs, like syphilis and HIV/AIDS, can kill.
- STDs, like the human papilloma virus which causes genital warts, may cause cancer of the cervix of the uterus or the penis.
- STDs can cause infertility in women and men.

HIV/AIDS Facts

- 364 million people worldwide live with HIV
- 800,000 to 1 million Americans infected
- 40,000 new HIV infections each year in US
- 100 Americans infected with HIV each day
- Women are the fastest growing HIV group
- 52% of women infected by heterosexual sex
- AIDS = 5th cause of death in men 25-44 yrs.
 - #1 cause of death for black men
 - 3rd cause of death for Hispanic men
- AIDS = 4th cause of death in women 25-44 yrs.
 - 2nd cause of death for black women
 - 3rd cause of death for Hispanic women

Teens & HIV/AIDS

- 123,000 young adults develop AIDS in 20s
- $\frac{1}{2}$ new HIV infections young people 15-24 yrs. (These young people were infected when teens)
- 2 teens get infected each hour
- African American & Hispanic youth, 13-19 yrs, are 15% of U.S. teens but they have 67% of HIV infections
- Only 44% of HIV-positive teens take their antiviral medicine all of the time
- Teens having anal sex or using alcohol & drugs have a higher risk of STD/HIV infection.
- The greater the number of sexual partners, the greater the risk of HIV infection.
- Most teens don't know they are infected

Parents & Kids, Talking About Sex ©

Tackling Tough Topics - AIDS/STDs - Continued

The HIV/AIDS virus is mainly spread by:

- sexual intercourse, vaginal, oral or anal, with an HIV-infected person
- an HIV-infected mother to her baby before birth or by breast feeding
- tattoos, body piercing or sharing needles with an HIV-infected person
- by the use of infected blood products

The HIV/AIDS virus is not spread by:

- breathing, coughing or sneezing.
- mosquito or other bug bites
- using telephones or toilets
- shaking hands or hugging
- social kissing
- sharing food, cups, spoons

Teachers' Concerns - With powerful antiviral medication prolonging HIV infected persons' lives, some students view HIV infection like diabetes, you just take medicine for it. They do not realize that these medicines must be taken 100% of the time to work and prevent the HIV infection from becoming resistant to them. They are also very toxic, can cause kidney stones and/or destroy the liver.

COMMUNICATION TIPS

Remember the only way to protect your children is to educate them to make healthy choices.

1. Ask what they have heard about HIV/AIDS on television or in school.
2. Start the conversation with a discussion about choices. Emphasize that every choice has consequences, both good and bad. Start by discussing simple choices, like doing homework or watching television. For each choice try to list the good and the bad things that can result. Work up to more complicated choices, like engaging in sexual activity or abstaining until ready for a mutually monogamous relationship in marriage.
3. Newspapers, magazines and television are filled with stories and advertisements about HIV/AIDS. This can be an opportunity to start your discussion. Other conversation starters can be health fairs and AIDS walks.
4. Tape television shows on HIV/AIDS and preview them BEFORE watching them with your children. Many will have a "safe sex" message that you want to be prepared to discuss. (See "Parents & Kids Talk About Sex" fact sheet on condom confusion.)
5. Teach your child about how HIV/AIDS can and cannot be spread.
6. Reassure your child that you are not discussing this topic because you assume that your child is having sex or taking drugs.
7. Teach your child that Jesus calls us to help and to pray for people who are infected with HIV/AIDS not to discriminate against them.
8. If you can't answer their question, let them know that you will find the answer.
9. Don't try to say everything at once. If your first attempt is brief, you can use other opportunities to continue the conversation.
10. Pray with and for our children remembering that God loves them more than we do. "See I will not forget you...I have carved you in the palm of my hand." Isaiah 49:15