

Myths about HIV and AIDS

Myth: If I am HIV positive, that means I have AIDS.

Fact: HIV positive means that your body was exposed to the virus. Since your body was exposed, there is a good chance that you are infected with the virus. But it does not mean that you have AIDS. AIDS develops over time.

Myth: HIV is the same as AIDS.

Fact: HIV is the virus that causes AIDS. AIDS is a group of symptoms that develop during the last stage of HIV infection.

Myth: I can get HIV from an infected person by shaking hands, hugging, or kissing.

Fact: HIV is not spread through casual contact. There is a slight possibility that you could become HIV infected through kissing if you and the infected person both have open bleeding sores in your mouths and the infected person's blood gets into yours. If you are really worried about this, do an oral exam on your partner before kissing them.

Myth: I can get HIV from telephones.

Fact: The HIV virus can't live outside of the body. You cannot become infected through saliva.

Myth: I can get HIV from doorknobs, tables, chairs, or push buttons.

Fact: The HIV virus can't live outside of the body.

Myth: I can get HIV from eating food that was prepared by an infected person.

Fact: Once again, HIV dies very quickly outside the body. Even if the food prep person cut his finger and then attractively arranged your food on your plate, you would not become infected from eating this food. Once

any body fluid is dry, you can be absolutely sure that the virus is dead. Just about the only way you could become infected this way is if the food prep person cuts off a finger, and as he is bleeding in your food, you are eating it at that exact moment. This scenario is rather extreme.

Myth: I can get HIV from toilets.

Fact: Toilets have been blamed for just about everything, from getting you pregnant to giving you sexually transmitted diseases (STD). The only way you might possibly become HIV infected from a toilet seat is to have unprotected sex while sitting on it!

Myth: I can get HIV from mosquitos.

Fact: Although it sounds very possible, you cannot become HIV infected through mosquitos, fleas, ticks, or lice. For this to happen, the HIV would have to survive in the insect saliva and salivary glands. HIV is a human virus and cannot survive outside of the human body. As a result, HIV will not and does not survive in mosquitos, fleas, ticks, or lice. If this were a route of transmission, we would all have been infected a very long time ago.

Myth: I can get HIV from breathing the same air as an infected person.

Fact: HIV does not spread through the air. You cannot get HIV by being in the same room with someone who is infected with the virus.

Handout 8-3