

Safe Sex Guidelines For Lesbians At Risk

These guidelines are intended for those lesbians who have reason to believe they may be infected with the AIDS virus or whose activities may place them at risk.

If either woman may be carrying the virus, she should not allow her menstrual blood, vaginal secretions, urine, feces or breast milk to enter her partner's body through the mouth, rectum, vagina, or broken skin. Although the virus has been found in saliva, there is no evidence that it can be transmitted through this fluid.

Safe Sex Practices For Lesbians at Risk

massage, hugging
social (dry) kissing
body-to-body rubbing
voyeurism, exhibitionism, fantasy
touching your own genitals (masturbation)
vibrators or other sex toys (using your own)
S/M or other activities that do not involve the exchange of body fluids

Possibly Safe Sex Practices For Lesbians at Risk

oral-genital contact (cunnilingus) using a thin piece of latex placed between the vulva and tongue
hand/finger-to-genital contact, vaginal or anal penetration with finger(s) using a disposable latex glove or finger cots
french (wet) kissing
external urine contact
anal-oral contact (rimming) with a latex barrier

Unsafe Sex Practices For Lesbians at Risk

unprotected cunnilingus (especially during menstruation)
unprotected hand/finger-to-vagina or anus contact, especially if you have cuts on hands
sharing needles (IV needles, skin piercing needles)
blood contact of any kind, including menstrual blood and sharing IV needles
urine or feces in mouth or vagina
unprotected rimming (anal-oral contact)
fisting (hand in rectum/vagina)
sharing sex toys that have contact with body fluids.

If you have sex with men in high risk groups, learn about, and always use, a condom.

If you have a new sexual partner, learn about her history and share your own. Do either of you fit a high risk description? Your responsibility is as vital as your new lover's to reveal important information about exposure.

For more information, call the San Francisco AIDS Foundation hotline:

in San Francisco: 863-AIDS
toll-free in Northern California: (800) FOR-AIDS
TDD: 864-6606

9:00 a.m.-9:00 p.m. Monday through Friday
11:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Saturday and Sunday

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Lesbians and AIDS

What's the Connection?

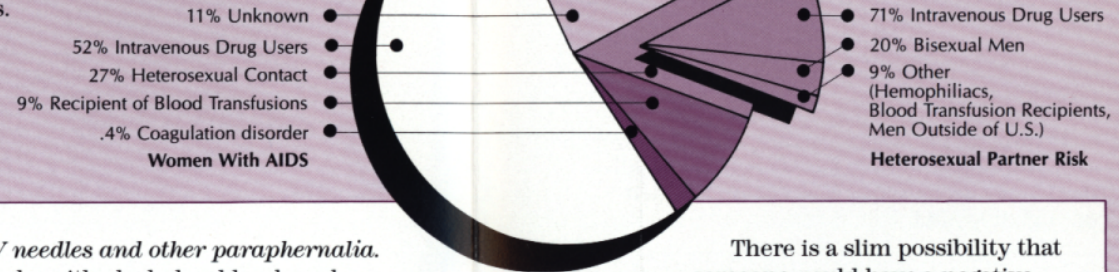


Photo by Cathy Cade

AIDS—Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome—is a disease caused by a virus which breaks down a part of the body's immune system. As of October, 1986 over 24,000 people have been diagnosed with AIDS in the U.S.

Approximately 7% of the people with AIDS in the U.S. are women—50% of these women are Black, 23% are Hispanic, 26% are Caucasian.

Lesbians are not at high risk of contracting or transmitting the AIDS virus at this time unless they use IV drugs or have unsafe sexual contact with people in risk groups.



Am I At Risk?

Since the AIDS virus is transmitted primarily through blood and semen, lesbians who may be at risk are those who:

- Share needles or any other paraphernalia if using IV drugs. This is the single most important risk category for lesbians.
- Have had sexual contact with —
 - people who use IV drugs;
 - men who have had gay sex since 1979;
 - people of either sex whose sexual histories are unknown;
 - people who are hemophiliac, or who have received blood transfusions or blood products between 1979–1985.
- Have used semen for donor insemination from a donor in a high risk group who is known to be antibody positive, or whose risk status is unknown.
- Have received blood transfusions or blood products between 1979–1985.

If I Think I May Have Been Exposed, What Should I Do?

You may want to consider taking the AIDS Antibody test at a testing site where your anonymity is guaranteed.

If you are infected with the AIDS virus, your body will produce antibodies. The AIDS antibody test detects the presence of these antibodies. Most people infected with the AIDS virus will probably not get AIDS but will probably remain contagious indefinitely.

You may want to take the test if you are considering pregnancy or want to know if you are infectious.

Don't share IV needles and other paraphernalia. Clean your works with alcohol or bleach and rinse thoroughly between each use.

Follow the suggested safe sex guidelines.

What About Pregnancy?

Women who are infected with the AIDS virus may pass it on to their unborn children during pregnancy or at birth. The AIDS virus can also be transmitted through breast milk.

For women who are infected with the AIDS virus, pregnancy may increase their risk for developing AIDS.

What If I Want To Use Donor Insemination To Become Pregnant?

If you are planning pregnancy through donor insemination, you may want to follow the recommendations listed below. They suggest screening techniques which may reduce your risk of exposure to the AIDS virus.

- You need to do a risk assessment of your donor(s) on a case-by-case basis. If you want a gay man as a donor, remember that many, but not all gay men are infected with the AIDS virus. Not all have engaged in high risk behaviors.
- Get information about your donor's health, medical and sexual history.
- With the availability of the AIDS antibody test, many lesbians have asked their donor(s) to be tested. Seriously consider having your donor tested for the AIDS antibody at a site where his anonymity and confidentiality is guaranteed.

There is a slim possibility that someone could have a negative antibody test result and yet be a virus carrier, especially if he is in a high risk group.

- The antibody test should be done twice prior to insemination with a period of 3 to 6 months between tests. Your donor should practice safe sex between tests.
- All sperm banks and private physicians have been advised to test sperm donors for the AIDS antibody.

If I'm Not At Risk For AIDS, What Does All This Have To Do With Me?

- Many lesbians have been personally affected by AIDS related deaths or illnesses of people close to them.
- Increased anti-gay hostility and discrimination as a result of AIDS hysteria affect lesbians as well as gay men.
- The AIDS epidemic emphasizes the need to address problems of substance abuse, and especially IV drug use, in the lesbian community.
- Insemination choices and co-parenting options have been limited by AIDS.
- Many lesbians are involved in AIDS related work as volunteers and paid workers. Lesbian contributions have strengthened and enriched the entire gay and lesbian community and furthered the fight against AIDS.

As these and other AIDS related issues continue to be a part of our lives, we will need to find creative and effective ways to support one another.