

HEALTH INFORMATION

means

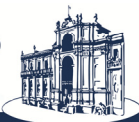
PREVENTION



Stop sexually transmitted infections:
USE CONDOMS!

Istituto Nazionale
per la promozione
della salute
delle popolazioni Migranti e per il contrasto
delle malattie della Povertà

INMP



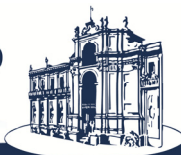
NIHMP

National Institute for Health
Migration and Poverty

This booklet was produced in the framework of the project “Clinical and social assistance study on the use of medical devices for controlling HIV and STD transmission among weak population groups”, financed by the Italian Ministry of Health for promoting prevention and spreading information about main Sexually Transmitted Infections, related diseases and health risks.



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HEALTH INFORMATION *means* PREVENTION

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INFORMATION

What is HIV?

HIV 1-2 (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is a virus that enters the body through direct contact with blood or other body fluids (i.e. semen and vaginal secretions) of an infected person. A person infected by HIV is called **seropositive**.

Main transmission modalities are unprotected sex, sharing of needles among users of intravenous drugs or accidental puncture with infected needles, and mother to child transmission during pregnancy and breastfeeding.

The virus destroys the immune system, that protects the body from infections and diseases. In particular, it destroys a type of cells called "CD4 lymphocytes".

A few days after infection (access of the virus to the blood stream), the virus can cause no symptoms or result in the so-called **acute symptomatic infection**, including sore throat, fever, diffuse skin eruption, lymph node, liver and spleen swelling, headache, tiredness, muscle and joint pain or, more rarely, vomiting, diarrhoea, night perspiration, weight loss and disorders of the nervous system. After two weeks, symptoms usually disappear and the chronic infection phase begins. In this phase, no disorders appear but, if infection is not diagnosed and treated, it develops into acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS).



What is AIDS?

AIDS is the appearance, some years after untreated HIV infection, of specific life-threatening disorders caused by the destruction of CD4 lymphocytes by the HIV.

What can I do?

It is impossible to eliminate HIV from the body, but AIDS development can be avoided by taking an “antiretroviral” therapy. This type of treatment improves the health conditions of seropositive people and their life expectancy, by preventing virus multiplication and further damages to the immune system. Antiviral drugs must be taken daily and lifelong and some of them have annoying side effects. Seropositive people must be regularly followed by a specialist doctor who can control the status of their immune system (i.e. quantity of virus in the blood - or viral load - and number of CD4 lymphocytes), indicate when the therapy should be started and what results can be obtained. **If you have been at risk for HIV infection, you should immediately get tested.**

Please note: if you know a seropositive person, **there is no risk of infection if you:**

- use **condoms** for oral, vaginal and anal sex
- share the same glass, plate, bed and toilet
- come in contact with his/her sweat or tears
- shake his/her hand
- kiss him/her
- have non-penetrative sex



What is syphilis?

Syphilis is an infection that causes, after 3 to 90 days (3 weeks on average), painless skin sores on genitals, mouth and anus (**primary syphilis**). Sores disappear even if untreated but the infection develops into **secondary syphilis** after 2-3 months. This phase causes diffuse skin eruption, hair loss, headache, hepatitis, bone and joint pain and sight disorders. After secondary phase, the infection can be diagnosed through blood test but no symptoms appear for years. This phase is called **latent syphilis**.

After a number of years, untreated syphilis affects other parts of the body. It is called **neurosyphilis** and causes nerve paralysis, limbs numbness, cardiovascular disorders, blindness and dementia. Syphilis can be transmitted during pregnancy and cause abortion or foetal malformations. If you have been at risk for syphilis infection you should immediately get tested. **Syphilis can be treated with antibiotics.**

What is viral hepatitis?

Hepatitis is caused by a virus that leads to liver inflammation. Different hepatitis viruses exist, most common are A, B, C, D and E. Viral hepatitis can cause jaundice (i.e. yellowish skin and mucous membranes), fatigue, generalised aches, fever, nausea and severe malaise.

Hepatitis A virus (HAV) can be transmitted through unprotected anal sex or needle sharing. It is dangerous if contracted during adulthood, because it can cause severe liver damages requiring hospital care.

Hepatitis B and C viruses (HBV and HCV) can spontaneously heal or become chronic and lead to cirrhosis (alterations in the shape and function of the liver) or tumour (hepatocarcinoma) even 20 or 30 years after infection. **Vaccines against HBV and HAV exist and drugs for HBV and HCV are available.**



What is chlamydia?

Chlamydia is a bacterial infection that affects the genitals. In some cases, it does not cause any symptoms; in other cases, genital secretions, inguinal lymph node swelling, pain during urination, bleeding and pain during sexual intercourses, abdominal pain. If left untreated, the infection reduces chances of having children (infertility/sterility) and can lead to pelvic inflammatory disease and to extrauterine pregnancy. It can be transmitted from mother to child during pregnancy and cause health problems to the foetus such as blindness (trachoma). **Chlamydia infection can be easily diagnosed and treated with antibiotics.**

What is condylomatosis?

Condylomatosis is an infection caused by the papilloma virus (HPV) that leads to the appearance of painless rough areas - called warts - on the skin of genitals and anus but also on the face, mouth and throat of the affected person. Genital warts can be easily diagnosed through medical examination or, in women, with a pap-test. If the patient does not know whether the sexual partner is infected, it is difficult to understand when infection occurred. It is very important to undergo regular examinations in order to avoid warts diffusion or re-appearance and because some types of HPV are associated with cervix and anus cancer development. In Italy, **vaccination is recommended to young girls from 13 years old.**



What is gonorrhoea?

Gonorrhoea is a bacterial infection transmitted through unprotected genital, anal and oral sexual intercourses. Symptoms appear within one month from infection and include genital and anal secretions, slight fever, inguinal lymph node swelling, pain and soreness during urination. If left untreated, gonorrhoea can lead to body-wide infection, sterility and infertility. In particular, it can cause pelvic inflammation, extra-uterine pregnancy and infertility in women, whereas in men it can spread to the rest of the genital area. **Gonorrhoea can be easily diagnosed and treated with antibiotics.**

What is genital herpes?

Genital herpes (HSV-1 and HSV-2) is a viral infection that causes the appearance, from 2 to 4 weeks after infection, of painful vesicles containing transparent liquid or pus near to or in the vagina, penis, anus or mouth. Other symptoms include soreness during urination and inguinal lymph node swelling. Symptoms disappear after 2 or 3 weeks but can reappear. When vesicles are visible, herpes can be easily diagnosed. It can be **treated with specific drugs** but multiple episodes can occur during one year. **In this case, the doctor can indicate a therapy for reducing clinical manifestations. Treatment lasts for several years and regular medical examinations are required.**

What is trichomoniasis?

Trichomoniasis is a parasite infection. It can be asymptomatic or cause, about one month after infection, vaginal itching or irritation and whitish, smelly discharge in women. In men, it causes prepuce inflammation and secretions from the penis. Sometimes it causes pain



during urination. **Trichomoniasis can be easily diagnosed and treated with antibiotics.**

If you are diagnosed with or if you think you have a sexually transmitted infection:

- Always use condoms during sexual intercourses
- Go to the doctor for accurate diagnosis
- Thoroughly follow medical prescriptions
- Always complete the prescribed treatment
- Avoid alcohol use during treatment
- If possible, ask you partner to undergo medical examination



PREVENTION

How to prevent sexually transmitted infections?

The most effective way for preventing sexually transmitted infections is to follow some simple rules:

- **always use condoms** during genital, anal and oral sexual intercourses, particularly for occasional sex
- avoid sexual practices causing **skin lesions** after or during intercourse
- only use **sterile** syringes and make sure that instruments used for piercing and tattoos are disposable or properly sterilised
- avoid direct contact with **blood**, always use protective gloves and clean with bleach
- many infections are transmitted during **pregnancy, childbirth** and **breastfeeding** from mother to child: in order to protect your child's health, have a test for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections!

Male and female condoms

Condom is an effective contraceptive mean able to avoid unwanted pregnancies and it also **protects** you from sexually transmitted infections, including HIV infection. Male and female condoms exist: they have to be placed on the penis or in the vagina to avoid contact between semen and vagina or the anal canal.



Which condoms should I buy?

- Always use good quality condoms, they can save your life!
- Buy latex or polyurethane condoms. They offer best quality and higher protection
- Make sure that the box is not damaged
- Check the expiry date: if you pass it, there is increased risk of breaking the condom

How to use condoms?

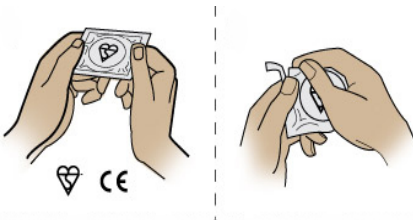
- Male condoms are produced in different sizes: choose the one that better fits your needs. If the condom is too big it could come off, if it is too small, it can break more easily
- Never use two condoms at once because they could break
- Open the condom package carefully and make sure not to damage it with your nails!
- Use **water-based lubricants** or lubricated condoms to prevent them from breaking, particularly in case of dryness in the vagina or anal sex. Please note: if lubricants are not water-based, they will damage the condom
- For oral sex, use flavoured or non-lubricated condoms
- Keep condoms where they cannot be damaged, away from heat sources
- For higher protection, you can use stronger condoms
- Never re-use a condom



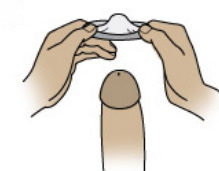
What NOT to do

- Never use baby oil, vaseline or other oil-based lubricants with latex condoms. Grease and oil can make them unusable
- Never open the condom package with your teeth or nails, you can damage the condom
- Never unroll a condom before putting it onto your penis. This could create air bubbles that can cause the condom to break

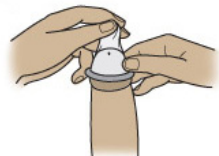
How to use a male condom



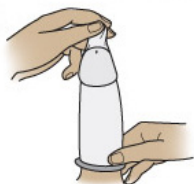
1) Open the package and remove the condom carefully. Don't use scissors or sharp objects and be careful not to damage it with your nails



2) Put the condom on the head of the penis before it comes in contact with the vagina



3) squeeze the tip of the condom (about 1 cm) with your fingers



4) Roll the condom down the shaft of the penis and keep squeezing the tip while unrolling the condom. You will prevent air bubbles from breaking the condom

5) Make sure the condom extend to the base of penis to preventing it from coming off



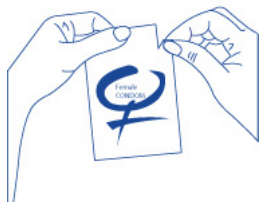
6) After ejaculation, the man should withdraw his penis before losing the erection

7) Hold the condom secure while withdrawing to help prevent the condom from coming off



8) Always dispose of used condoms safely, never leave them in public places

How to use a female condom



1) Open the package and remove the condom carefully. Do not use scissors or sharp objects and be careful not to damage it with your nails

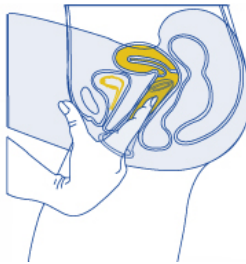
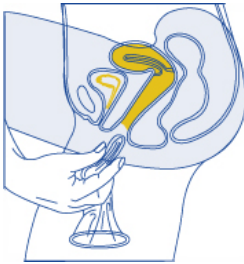
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2) Check the condom and make sure it is completely lubricated inside and outside. If necessary, apply more lubricant



3) With one hand squeeze together the sides of the inner ring at the closed end of the condom and with the other hand open the outer labia of your vagina



4) Gently put the condom inside the vagina and let the outer ring hang outside the vagina

5) When both partners are ready, simply insert the penis into the condom



6) After intercourse, twist the outer ring and then gently pull the condom out

7) Dispose of the condom in a rubbish bin and NEVER in the toilet

HIV TESTING

It is of crucial importance to know as soon as possible if you have a sexually transmitted infection and to obtain **early diagnosis**:

- you will prevent untreated infection from causing even severe consequences
- You will avoid exposing other people to health risks

HIV test

If you think you are at risk for HIV infection, **you should get tested**.

In Italy, **HIV test is free**. If you prefer, **you can remain anonymous**.

The test is generally a blood test analysed in laboratory. It detects the presence of cells which react against the virus. These cells are called “antibodies”. Antibodies appear in the blood from 3 weeks to 6 months after infection. Therefore, you can make the test 3 weeks after the moment you think you were at risk and then repeat it after 3 and 6 months. During this time, which is called **window period**, it is important to protect your health and the health of the others. **In fact, the test does not protect from infection and you could also infect other people.**

If the test result is **positive**, a confirmation test, called **western blot**, is performed for detecting parts of the virus in the blood, called antigens. If the result is still uncertain, a direct assessment of the quantity of virus in the blood (viral load) is performed.

At the NIHMP, you can undergo a **rapid test** with a single drop of blood from your finger. Results are available after 30 minutes. The rapid test used is produced in the USA and was approved by the *Food and Drugs*



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Administration (FDA) in 2008. It has a sensitivity of 99.8% and a specificity of 98.6% (for further information please visit the website www.cdc.gov).

Also in this case, if test result is positive, a confirmation test is required. For HIV testing, **no** medical prescription is needed.

For HIV testing you will be asked to sign an informed consent. Test results cannot be collected by a third person.

If test result is NEGATIVE:

- the test **DID NOT** detect HIV antibodies
- **remember** the window period: if you got infected up to six months before testing, infection could not be detected and you should get tested after 3 and 6 months

If test result is POSITIVE:

- HIV antibodies were detected and you could have been infected
- you will make a **confirmation test**

Remember, you won't be alone! An infectious disease specialist doctor and a psychologist will follow you and provide a **counselling** service suited to your needs before and after the test.

If you are a foreign citizen, a cultural mediation service is provided.

At your first medical examination, you will receive free male and female condoms.



USEFUL ADDRESSES AND NOTES

INMP/NIHMP - National Institute for Health, Migration and Poverty

Via delle Fratte di Trastevere 52

- from **Monday** to **Friday** from **7.30 am** to **1.00 pm**
- **Tuesday**, **Wednesday** and **Thursday** also in the afternoon from **2.00** to **5.00 pm**
- **Saturday** and **Sunday** from **8.00 am** to **1.00 pm**

www.inmp.it

info@inmp.it

For further information about transmission, diagnosis and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases, please visit the following **websites**:

www.salute.gov.it

www.who.int

www.cdc.gov

www.unaids.org

www.ecdc.europa.eu

www.simit.org

www.epicentro.iss.it

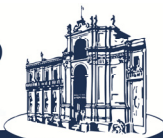


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Health**



Ministero della Salute

**“Clinical and social assistance study on the use
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