



Designed as part of FHI 360's Basha Lesedi Project, this booklet gives you basic information on the following topics:

- HIV and AIDS
- HIV transmission and prevention
- Risk reduction techniques
- Sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- Risky sexual practices
- Multiple concurrent partnerships (MCPs)
- Alcohol
- Condoms
- Male circumcision

What is

# HIV?

HIV stands for **Human Immunodeficiency Virus**, and is the virus that leads to AIDS. HIV gradually weakens the immune system – the part of our bodies that fights infections and diseases and keeps us healthy. A person can have HIV and not know it because he or she might not feel sick. Even if a person does not know that he or she has HIV, they can infect others.

**The good news is that HIV is preventable.**

See page  
9 for more  
information  
on preventing  
HIV



# What is **AIDS?**

AIDS, which stands for **Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome**, occurs as a result of being infected with HIV. A person can have HIV for years before developing AIDS. Because someone with AIDS has a weakened immune system their body cannot fight certain infections, like tuberculosis and some kinds of pneumonia.

There is no cure for AIDS, but there are medicines available that can help people with AIDS have long and active lives. They are called antiretroviral drugs, or ARVs. The pills need to be taken every day for the rest of one's life. While that may sound easy, people sometimes forget to take their pills every day, which can make the virus even more dangerous. Sometimes the pills can have serious side effects.

How is  
**HIV not**  
transmitted?

**I** choose **to** know



# How IS HIV transmitted?

See page  
6 for more  
information  
on STIs

A person can be infected with HIV through contact with the blood, semen, vaginal fluids or breast milk of a person living with the virus. In Botswana the most common way HIV is transmitted is through **unprotected sex** (intercourse without a condom).

If you are pregnant and HIV positive you can pass the disease onto your unborn child. Botswana has been very successful with the government's program on prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT); however about 4% of children whose mother is HIV positive are born with the infection.

Since HIV can be passed from someone who has it to another person through unprotected sex, it is one kind of sexually transmitted infection, or STI (See page 6 for more information on STIs).

There are **many misunderstandings** about how a person can get HIV. For instance, you do not get HIV through insect or mosquito bites, sharing food or drink, kissing or hugging, swimming in the same pool, sharing clothes or towels, using public toilets or witchcraft.

# What are sexually transmitted infections?

STIs are infections that are spread mostly through person-to-person sexual contact. There are over 30 different STIs. If not treated, some STIs can have severe consequences, including infertility (making you unable to get pregnant) and cancer.

Although some STIs have no cure, others can be cured using medicines called antibiotics. You may not know that you have an infection. You may feel healthy and not have any rashes or sores, but are in fact sick. If you suspect you or your partner might have an STI both of you should visit a clinic or health facility for a check-up.



The most common STIs are chlamydia, genital herpes, human papilloma virus (HPV), gonorrhea and syphilis.

Remember HIV, as described on page 3, is also an STI.



I choose to know

# Understanding STIs

## STI

### Description

#### Chlamydia

A very common bacterial infection of the genitals, anus or throat.

#### Genital Herpes

A disease affecting the skin around the genitals

#### Human Papillomavirus (HPV)

A very common virus of which there are more than 100 types

### The Symptoms

When present, include painful urination, unusual discharge and, in women, bleeding between periods or after sex. Often there are no symptoms.

If present, include blisters on or around the genital and rectum areas which turn into sores. Often there are no symptoms.

Genital warts, which develop a small, fleshy, cauliflower-like appearance. In women, some types of HPV can develop into cancer of the cervix (the lower part of the uterus) which has no symptoms until the disease has progressed.

### How Transmitted

During vaginal, oral or anal sex

Mother-to-child during childbirth.

When the skin, vagina, penis or mouth touches the skin or sores of an infected person, even if he or she does not have any symptoms

Genital contact during anal and vaginal sex and occasionally from oral sex or genital-to-genital contact. It can also occasionally be spread through skin-to-skin contact.

### How Treated

Oral antibiotics taken by both partners to prevent reinfection.

None, but symptoms can usually be controlled using antiviral medicines

None, but warts can be removed. Women should get regular screening to detect and treat pre-cancerous areas on the cervix called lesions.

### If not treated?

In women, it causes irreversible damage to reproductive organs and infertility. There are few complications for men.

The virus remains in the body for life, but taking medication can decrease the risk of transmission  
Potentially fatal infections in babies

In most cases the body clears the infection within two years.  
If cervical cancer is detected early it is easier to treat and less likely to be fatal. Less common cancers of the vulva, anus or penis can also develop as a result of HPV.

# Understanding STIs (cont)

## STI Description

### Gonorrhoea

A bacterial infection which grows in the reproductive system of men and women as well as sometimes the mouth, throat, eyes and anus

## The Symptoms

If present, include discharge and painful urination for both sexes. In women, vaginal bleeding between periods or after sex, as well as abdominal and/or pelvic pain. Men might have pain or swelling in one testicle. Often there are no symptoms.

## How Transmitted

Contact with the penis, vagina, mouth or anus

Mother-to-child during delivery

## How Treated

Dual antibiotic therapy can cure the infection but will not reverse any damage the person has suffered as a result of having gonorrhoea e.g., blindness

## If not treated?

Infertility in men and women

Life-threatening illness if it spreads to the blood and joints

Blindness, joint infection or life-threatening blood infection in babies

### Syphilis

A bacterial infection which can spread throughout the body

The first sign is a painless sore or sores which usually appear on or around the genitals or mouth. Many people do not have symptoms for years.

Direct contact with a sore, usually during unprotected sex, but sometimes through kissing

Mother-to-child during childbirth

Antibiotics can cure the infection but not undo any damage

May affect the heart, central nervous system, eyes, liver, bones and joints

A stillbirth (a baby born dead) or the birth of a baby who dies shortly thereafter

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# What are risky sexual practices?

- Sex without a condom or using a condom incorrectly
- Having many sexual partners or sex with someone who has other partners
- Having sexual relations when you or your partner have an STI
- Dry or rough sex
- Abusing alcohol or drugs
- Not knowing the HIV status of your sexual partner/s.

## How can you reduce your risk of being infected?

### Avoid Risky sex

#### Be Faithful

Being **faithful** to one partner.

Avoiding risky sexual practices such as having sex when you have an STI or dry sex. Remember **you cannot tell by looking at someone** if he or she has an STI.

#### Know your status

Knowing **your own** and **your partner/s'** HIV status by being tested and then taking appropriate measures e.g., always having sex with a condom or abstaining.

## Abstinence

Not having **penile-vaginal** (when a male puts his penis inside a female's vagina), **penile-anal** (when a male puts his penis inside another person's anus), or **oral sex** (when a male puts his penis inside another person's mouth or a person puts his or her mouth on top of a female's vagina). It is possible for people who have had sex in the past to decide not to have sex. This is called secondary abstinence, and can reduce your chances of getting HIV.

## Have **One** partner

**Reducing your total number of sexual partners.** Multiple concurrent partnerships (MCP) - or having more than one sex partner at the same time - increase your risk of getting HIV or another STI. Having multiple sexual partners creates an invisible sexual network through which new infections can spread quickly - you are connected to your sexual partner/s as well as all of his or her other sexual partner/s.

## Masturbating

Masturbating (rubbing your private parts) or mutual masturbation are low risk activities. It is called mutual masturbation when two people do it at the same time or stimulate each other with their hands. It's important to remember that **masturbation does not involve penetration** (vaginal, anal or oral sex), which is why it lowers the risk of HIV and STIs.

## Use Condoms

Using condoms correctly **every time you have sex**. When used consistently and correctly, condoms are highly effective in stopping the spread of HIV (during vaginal, oral or anal intercourse). Condoms are also effective in preventing pregnancy and STIs. When using condoms for anal sex, it is important to use lubricants to avoid condom breakage.

## Circumcision

**Circumcising males**, which is the practice of removing the foreskin of a penis, has been proven to lower the risk of getting infected. However, circumcision does not offer 100% protection against infection, so even circumcised males must practice safe sex.

## Get Treatment

Getting treatment if you have, or think you might have, an STI. It is important for you and your partner/s to **get tested and treated** so you do not keep passing the STI to each other.

## Avoid Drunkenness

Avoiding having sex while drunk or high. Often when a person is drunk or high, he or she may **not be able to make a good decision**, which could lead to unprotected sex. Alcohol is also associated with rape or date rape (when your date or partner forces you to have sex with them).

For more information about **anything** in this booklet please visit a **clinic or health facility**. You can also visit a **library** or do **research** on the internet.



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**BASHA  
LESEDI PROJECT**

This booklet is part of Family Health International's (FHI 360) Basha Lesedi Project which aimed to reduce HIV infections among youth 10-17 years old. Part of this project was helping adults communicate with children and youth about risky behaviors. This booklet was field tested in communities in Botswana and found to be a helpful tool.

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