Living in a world with HIV/AIDS

Can you tell if someone is HIV positive?

You cannot tell by looking! People often think that you can tell who is HIV positive by just looking at the person. A person with HIV does not have to be thin. Even a person who looks healthy can have HIV. People infected with the virus often look healthy for a long period of time. They can be infected with the virus for many years before they begin to look sick.

What can you do if someone you know is HIV positive?

The first thing you can do if someone you know is HIV positive is to be supportive. Don’t blame them or make them feel they are less of a person than what they were before they became HIV positive. Keep in mind that anyone can have HIV. It is not something that just happens to other people, someone who is HIV positive can be your brother, sister, cousin or best friend. Help care for people with HIV because they need your support.

If I think I might be infected with HIV, what should I do first?

It is important that you discuss your situation with a qualified health professional, such as an HIV testing counsellor. He or she will privately listen to your concerns, answer your questions, and provide information to help you decide if you want to be tested.

How can I know if I have HIV?

The only way to know for sure whether you are HIV positive or negative is by going for an HIV test. The HIV test is a test for the antibodies that your body produces to fight the infection. When you go for an HIV test, a blood sample will be collected and tested to see if the antibodies are present.

However, you are always advised that after your first test, you should go back after 3 months for another test as it can take some time for antibodies to develop. If you are sexually active it’s also a good idea to go routine tests every couple of months just to be safe. Although most people are afraid of taking the test, it’s a good idea because if you test positive you can make responsible and wise choices about your future and if you are negative it’s a relief that you have avoided becoming infected and that you have already taken a big step to live a healthier life.

At what age can you take an HIV test?

HIV testing is available for all ages.

What can you do if you have HIV?

You can start by talking to a doctor or health care professional about getting treatment to avoid getting illnesses caused by AIDS and see a trained counsellor to help you deal with the emotional and social problems you may experience as a result of your positive status.

There are many organisations that help people living with HIV. Look at the resources given at the end of this brochure. Contact them for advice on how to stay healthy and optimistic. They can also guide you in finding a way to let your status get you down. You are still an able bodied person who can achieve all your dreams.

Can you live a normal life after getting infected with HIV?

HIV positive people can still live normal lives just like any other human being. You can be very happy and healthy by living positively. You have a healthy diet, do exercises to keep you strong and fit, get medical treatment for infections right away, cut out cigarettes and alcohol, and always use a condom.

How can I best tell someone that I am HIV positive?

Telling a close friend or family member that you have HIV/AIDS takes courage. Before you tell anyone other than a health care provider, you need to feel emotionally stable about your HIV status. When you disclose your status be prepared to deal with the disbelief, fear, anger, accusations of betrayal or other emotional reactions from people you tell. But also remember that telling someone you love and trust will give you the support you need and help you live happier and healthier.

Who can I talk to if I need information and future care?

You can visit Youth Friendly Health Centres and you will be attended to by trained and very friendly peer counsellors who can advise you on HIV and other health questions you may have. You can also talk to a nurse or doctor at a clinic or even NGOs who work in the field of HIV/AIDS.
How do you get HIV?

There are four ways that you can get infected with HIV:

1. By having sex with an infected person without using a condom. You can also get other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) like syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia, and herpes, which can increase your chances of acquiring the HIV virus.

2. From HIV-infected blood transfusions, blood products and transplanted organs, though the risk of contracting HIV from the blood donation is screened for HIV in Zambia.

3. Sharing sharp objects like razors and blades, needles, toothbrushes, and towels when these objects are being used to cut or pierce the skin or if the hand used to cut or pierce the skin is in contact with the sexual organs of the other, or if the hand used to cut or pierce the skin stimulates the other person’s sexual organs has cuts or sores on it.

4. From babies born to HIV-infected mothers. HIV can also enter the mouth of the partner. It is possible to get HIV from self-masturbation because only you are at risk of infection. Masturbation between two partners. You cannot get infected with HIV/AIDS or an STI. It takes only one unprotected sex (sex without a condom) act to get infected with HIV/AIDS or an STI. Using two or more condoms is not double protection, it puts both you and your partner at risk of infection or unwanted pregnancy.

Can you get HIV from a mosquito bite?

Yes, you can become infected with HIV any time you have unprotected sexual intercourse – even during your periods.

Can you get HIV from a mosquito bite?

No, it is not true. The virus is small, but with a condom that has been produced by a known manufacturer still used long after the expiration date (such as in cool dark places) and used properly (such as in cool dark places), the virus cannot pass through the condom to the skin past its expiry date and using a water-based lubricant if necessary, the virus cannot pass through. Make sure that you have a condom that has been produced properly and say sometimes it fails but this is not accurate. The actual condom is a polyurethane device but often they are not used correctly which can result in breaking or problems.

Can you get infected with HIV from mosquitoes?

It is true that there is so small that it can pass through the skin of the virus.