



Lesbian Safer Sex

Are Lesbians At Risk for Contracting HIV from Each Other?

Yes!! There have been cases reported since the mid 1980's which indicate that women are transmitting HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) to each other. Despite these reports the Federal Government's Center for Disease Control (CDC) does not include female to female transmission in its AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) reports. Many lesbians mistakenly believe *that they are not at risk*. HIV is transmitted when blood, vaginal fluids, breast milk or semen from an HIV infected person enters your blood stream.

Lesbians can be infected with HIV through having unsafe sex (with women or men), donor insemination, sharing injectable drug works, piercing, tattooing and blood transfusions.

Because *we do know how HIV is transmitted* we can define some guidelines for safer sex and explain which risky sexual behaviors are potentially risky.

BE AWARE: Drug or alcohol use impairs judgement in many areas including practicing safer sex.



Whether a sexual behavior is safe or unsafe depends on the chances of your partner's bodily fluids coming in contact with your blood.

- **Wet kissing** is safer unless either of you have a sore or cut in your mouth or bleeding gums. After you brush your teeth or floss, wait a half an hour before kissing.
- **Touching** your lover's breast, massage, masturbation and body to body rubbing are safer--as long as there is no blood or breast milk exchanged.
- **Sores or cuts** on the fingers, mouth or vagina of either partner can increase risk during vaginal and anal contact. Using a glove can prevent a way for the virus to get into your blood stream.
- **Unprotected oral sex** is risky, especially when your partner has her period or a vaginal infection. To make it safer, cover her genital area (vulva) with a latex dam (also known as a dental dam) or you can cut open a condom to make a barrier. If a woman is infected, her menstrual blood, vaginal secretions and ejaculate will have the virus in it. HIV has been found in these fluids.
- **Sex toys** are safer when used by yourself, but should not be shared without a new condom being put on them.
- **S&M or rough sex** is safer if there is no blood involved. If you are piercing each other clean the needle with bleach. In shaving use separate razors.



Lesbian Safer Sex Guidelines

NOT RISKY

Massage
Hugging
Fantasy
Voyeurism
Exhibitionism
Masturbation (Touching Yourself)
Vibrators or other sex toys (Not shared)
Dry Kissing
Body To Body Rubbing or "Tribadism"
when fluids are not involved

POSSIBLY RISKY

Wet (French) Kissing
Shared hand & genital contact with a barrier
such as a fingercot, glove, or latex dam
(a square piece of latex)
Cunnilingus (Oral-Genital contact)
using a barrier
Fisting using a barrier

PROBABLY RISKY

Shared hand, finger & genital contact
with cuts or sores
Cunnilingus (Oral or Tongue to genital contact)
without a barrier

VERY RISKY

Cunnilingus without a barrier during menstruation
Femal or male ejaculate in the mouth, vagina or anus
Rimming without a barrier
Fisting without a barrier such as a glove
Sharing sex toys without a barrier
Sharing needles of any kind, i.e.:
to shoot drugs, pierce or tattoo the skin

Drugs, Needles & HIV

If you inject drugs, don't share your equipment ("kit" or "works"). If you have to share, clean the equipment between use by flushing the syringe and needle with bleach and water, then flush it with clean uncontaminated clear water.

If You Are Considering Pregnancy

If you have sex with a man or use donated sperm, make sure he has two HIV tests six months apart and tested negative both times. The first test should be six months after his last possible exposure to HIV. The donor must have no possible exposure to HIV between his last test and donation. All licensed sperm banks test their donors carefully and test the sperm twice.

Sex with Men

If you have sex with a man, the man must wear a condom for vaginal and anal intercourse. Additionally, if you engage in oral sex, it is necessary that a man wear a condom. HIV is in semen and pre-ejaculate.

If You Think You Are Or Have Been At Risk For HIV Infection

If you believe you have been exposed to the HIV virus, get the HIV test. Early detection leads to early treatment (intervention) which slows down the progression of the virus. To be sure of your results, wait 3-6 months after your last risk before retaking the test.



It is understandable to be scared if you think you might have been exposed to HIV. Take a calm and realistic look at the risks you might have taken. Take advantage of the resources we've listed to help you answer any questions you have regarding risky behaviors.

Regardless of your HIV status you should practice safer sex now to protect yourself and your partner from HIV and STD's (Sexually Transmitted Diseases).

Hotlines

Southern California..... (800) 922-2437
Bilingual Hotline (English/Spanish)..... (800) 400-7432
TDD..... (800) 553-2437
Northern California (English/Spanish/Tagalog).. (800) 367-2437
TDD..... (415) 864-6606
National AIDS Hotline..... (800) 342-2437
In Spanish..... (800) 344-7432
TDD..... (800) 243-7889

The Center

L.A. Gay & Lesbian Community Services Center

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