

AIDS FOCUS

Be informed. Change your world.



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Quotable Quotes

"AIDS is no longer just a disease, it is a human rights issue." - Nelson Mandela



Traditional medicines and HIV

Traditional healers and herbal "cures" have long been part of the HIV pandemic. Owing to the fact that free provision of antiretrovirals by the government took a very long time to be implemented, the easy road for other "cures" and treatments was paved. Since the provision of antiretrovirals, the popularity of these options has remained high.



Why do people choose herbal?

Many people opt for herbal HIV treatments because they are trying to avoid the well-known side effects of ARV's. There is also a large gap between the point of diagnosis and the provision of ARV's and people are desperate to find a cure. Even after counselling at an HIV clinic, HIV positive individuals will go straight to a traditional healer where they are promised a cure. These people are lured with concoctions that claim to be able to cure them after one course – this, as opposed to a lengthy treatment process at a clinic, is understandably more attractive. Add to this the desperation one feels after being diagnosed as HIV positive and one can understand why herbal and traditional healing measures remain popular.

The Right to Informed Consent

Testing for HIV needs to be an informed decision. This means that you need to understand the implications of the test result and still be willing to take the test. No one can force you to have an HIV test. You need to carefully think about having an HIV test and be prepared to deal with the results.

Informed consent is always required before an HIV test can be carried out on a person. It is also required before anyone can disclose the tested person's HIV status.

Making a decision to be tested for HIV is a difficult one. It is stressful and sometimes traumatic. It has medical, psychological, ethical and social implications. A hospital or clinic is a place where people have great trust and faith in the staff. It is not an environment that should be associated with infringement of human rights. Health care workers, who have always been protectors of human life and well-being, must become protectors of human rights. With a sensitive and informed approach, this is a responsibility that the profession can meet.



Teens with HIV - Psychological aspects

Disclosure

Very often, the process of disclosure is seen as a once-off event, but in reality, this is not the case. Teens who are HIV positive will be faced with many situations throughout their lives where they will feel the need to disclose their status. To aid teens in this process, their caregivers need to help them with information on the disease and emotional support.

Teenagers who are HIV positive feel a great deal of anxiety about being different and they fear rejection. As an adult dealing with a teen that is infected, it's important not to seem intrusive. All decisions must be made by the teen himself.

Respecting your health



Respecting your health is important for everyone, but even more so if you're living with HIV. While you may have completely neglected yourself when you were HIV negative, now that you are positive, looking after your health will be reflected in living a longer happier life. Eating healthily, exercising, resting enough, going for medical check-ups, having protected sex and becoming positive about your health can really be a matter of life and death.

When you're diagnosed with HIV, it may be hard to see yourself as anything other than unhealthy. But for someone who is HIV positive, the lifestyle choices you make impact enormously on your health. For many HIV positive people, staying optimistic about one's health is an enormously hard task.

Here are some reasons to improve your health:

- Lifestyle changes can boost your immune system and help you slow the progression of HIV
- Being healthy will not only protect you from infections, but help you to heal faster
- Taking care of your health will give you more energy than you thought was possible
- Taking care of your health makes being diagnosed with HIV an opportunity to live a healthier, better life

Three reasons to use condoms

Condoms can prevent pregnancy

1

When used correctly and consistently, condoms are an effective means of preventing pregnancy. Pregnancy rates for condoms range from 3 percent to almost 14 percent. This means 3 to 14 out of 100 women get pregnant in a year, using only condoms for contraception. These pregnancies are not due primarily to condom failure, but are mainly linked to condoms not being used consistently or correctly. This means the large majority couples who use condoms consistently are at very low risk of pregnancy.

Condoms can prevent STI's

2

When used correctly and consistently, condoms are an extremely effective means of preventing Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and HIV. The evidence for this is clearest in studies of couples in which one person is infected with HIV and the other not, identified as "discordant couples". In a study of discordant couples in Europe (who reported consistent condom use) none of the uninfected partners became infected.

Condoms have a long shelf-life

3

Condoms in intact foil packages last at least five years on the shelf. Plastic packages expose condoms to more rapid deterioration from oxidation, humidity, ozone and ultraviolet light. When properly sealed in foil packages, modern latex condoms are quite resistant to most adverse environmental conditions and will retain their quality for at least five years and probably longer.

Contraceptives and antiretrovirals

Many women taking antiretrovirals are using contraception simultaneously. Antiretrovirals can affect the effectiveness of contraceptives. Contraceptives, however, do not affect the effectiveness of antiretrovirals. Efavirenz is a type of antiretroviral that can cause fetal abnormalities and should always be used with a reliable contraceptive.

Women and birth control

Many women who are on ARVs do use birth control. Often this is a conscious decision to refrain from having children. Sometimes it is the antiretrovirals themselves that require birth control. The antiretroviral Efavirenz (Stocrin) causes birth defects and fertile women who take it should use reliable birth control.

Antiretrovirals affect birth control

Antiretrovirals can decrease the efficacy of contraception. The following antiretrovirals can make your contraceptive ineffective: Efavirenz, Nevirapine and Ritonavir. All the other antiretrovirals do not affect your contraceptive.

If you are taking co-trimoxazole (Bactrim), this can decrease the efficacy of the Pill.

What contraception can I use if I am taking one of these drugs?

If you are taking Efavirenz, Nevirapine, Ritonavir or Bactrim then you may need to alter your contraceptive. Bactrim specifically affects the Pill rather than injectable forms of contraception. Efavirenz, Ritonavir and Nevirapine may require a higher and more frequent dose of the Pill or injectable contraception to be effective.

Contraception like the Loop (intrauterine contraceptive device) are not generally recommended in someone with HIV as they can increase your risk of womb infections (pelvic inflammatory disease).

Always use a condom if you are HIV positive, even if you are taking contraception.



Knowledge Quiz

How much do you know about HIV/AIDS

1. AIDS is a disease without a cure spread mainly by unprotected sex or sharing needles with someone who has HIV. **True or False**
2. If you are HIV positive and pregnant, there are medicines you can take that can greatly decrease the chances of your baby having HIV. **True or False**
3. Only drug users and gay men need to worry about becoming infected with HIV. **True or False**
4. Women will not get HIV if they use birth control pills and/or a diaphragm. **True or False**



Answers:
1- true
2- true
3- false
4- false

No HIV risk:

- Sexual activities with no genital contact (intimate massage, masturbation)
- Kissing or licking non-genital areas
- Phone sex
- Erotic books or videos
- Using sex toys without sharing the toys, or with condoms on the toys
 - Injecting with a new needle