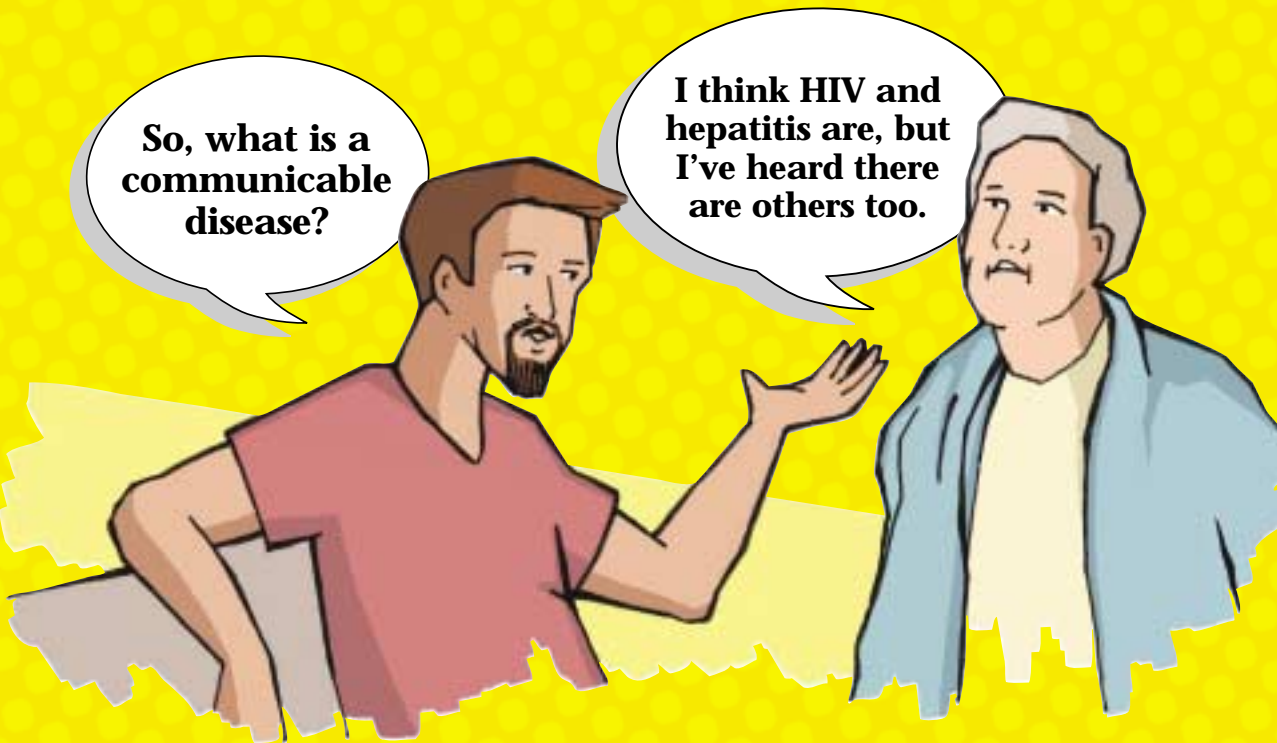


Communicable Diseases: Are You At Risk?



Albany Medical College

This educational resource is a collaborative effort among the Division of HIV Medicine at Albany Medical College, the New York State Department of Correctional Services and numerous pharmaceutical companies.



So, what is a communicable disease?

I think HIV and hepatitis are, but I've heard there are others too.



This booklet is about ways to prevent communicable diseases. Two of these are HIV and hepatitis C. Did you know there are a lot of others?

For starters, let's define what a communicable disease is:

A **communicable disease** is an illness that can be transmitted from one person to another through certain behaviors such as sexual activity or sharing needles.

The ways of getting and spreading communicable diseases are connected. Certain behaviors such as sharing needles may put you at risk of getting a number of different diseases. Through these risky behaviors, it is also likely that you can transmit these diseases to others in your community. It's a two-way street.

Transmission: the spread of an infection from one person to another.

If I share needles or works, is it possible that I'll catch more than HIV?

I'm still unsure how communicable diseases are related to one another by doing certain things.



If a person does any of the following behaviors listed below, he/she is at risk for getting and spreading a number of different diseases. For example, if you share needles or works, you are putting yourself or your partner at risk for hepatitis B, hepatitis C, HIV, and skin/bloodstream infections.

Certain behaviors put you at risk for these diseases:

INTRAVENOUS DRUG USE

Hepatitis B
Hepatitis C
HIV
Skin/Bloodstream Infections

INTRANASAL COCAINE

Hepatitis B
Hepatitis C

UNPROTECTED SEX

Hepatitis B
Hepatitis C
HIV
Other Sexually Transmitted Diseases

TATTOOING/BODY PIERCING

Hepatitis B
Hepatitis C
HIV
Skin/Bloodstream Infections

The good news is that communicable diseases are PREVENTABLE!

To protect yourself from communicable diseases:

- Do not share drugs or works
- Abstain from sex or use a condom (family reunion visits with a partner)
- Do not share personal articles:
 - Razors
 - Toothbrushes
 - Nail clippers/files




In addition, for good hygiene, you should not share:

- Combs/hairbrushes
- Towels
- Clothing



Keep personal items
PERSONAL!



The names of these diseases are confusing.

Yeah, describing each disease would help.

Hepatitis B: a serious disease caused by a virus that attacks the liver. The virus, which is called hepatitis B virus (HBV), can cause lifelong infection, cirrhosis (scarring) of the liver, liver cancer, liver failure and death.¹ HBV is spread primarily by the blood of an infected person. It can also be transmitted sexually.

Hepatitis C: a liver disease caused by the hepatitis C virus (HCV), which is found in the blood of persons who have the disease.² HCV is spread primarily by the blood of an infected person but can occasionally be spread by sexual contact as well.

HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus): the virus that causes AIDS. This virus is passed from one person to another through blood-to-blood and sexual contact. Infected pregnant women can pass HIV to their babies during pregnancy or delivery, as well as through breast-feeding.³

Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs): infections that can be spread through sexual contact with another person who is infected. These include intercourse (vaginal or anal), oral sex, and the sharing of sexual devices, such as vibrators.⁴

There are many different types of STDs:

- Chlamydia
- Crabs/Pubic Lice
- Genital Warts [Human Papillomavirus (HPV)]
- Gonorrhea
- Hepatitis B
- Hepatitis C
- Herpes Simplex
- HIV
- Scabies (Pubic)
- Syphilis
- Trichomonas

As you will see, or have seen in the videotape that goes with this booklet, some diseases are curable and some are controllable. The good news is that treatments are available for all of these illnesses.

1. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, 2003
2 & 3. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, 2003
4. American Social Health Association, 2003

If I've shared needles, had sex without a condom, or have done other risky behaviors, what should I do?

Should I get tested only if I have symptoms for these diseases?



If you have engaged in **ANY** of the behaviors listed on page 2, it is highly recommended that you get tested. Just because you have your blood drawn in the medical unit does **NOT** mean you are being tested for HIV. HIV tests require your consent. In some states such as New York, consent is written but in others it is not. Not all forms of hepatitis and STDs are routinely tested. Ask your health care provider if you are unsure.

Communicable diseases do not discriminate and many do not have obvious symptoms. Often, people don't know they are infected.



Why get tested while in prison?

- It is better to know than not know; all of these diseases are treatable!
- It can relieve your anxiety and tension of not knowing.
- If you test positive, medical care may help you live longer.
- If you test positive, you can protect your partner, friends and family from getting ill.
- If you test negative, you can learn how to protect yourself and those you care about in the future.

Is there hope for people who test positive for any of these illnesses?

How can I go about getting tested?



There is hope for people with HIV, hepatitis B & C and sexually transmitted diseases!

- Medications are available for **ALL** of these illnesses.
- You can live with a positive diagnosis and have a good quality of life with medical care.
- A positive diagnosis for any of these diseases is **NOT** a death sentence.
- The sooner you know your diagnosis, the more you can do to stay well.
- A number of supports are available such as peer groups and counselors, as well as medical and counseling staff. Connect with someone you trust who helps you feel comfortable.
- Educational materials on HIV, hepatitis B & C and STDs are available to help you make decisions about your health.

What Now?



If you would like to be tested for a communicable disease or diseases, please complete the next page and give it to a medical provider or someone else who can arrange for testing at your facility.

Remember, there are people at your facility to support you and answer your questions.

Just ask!

Risk Assessment

Please print your Department Identification Number (D.I.N.): _____

- Have you ever had a tattoo or body piercing? Yes No Not Sure
- Have you or your sex partner ever injected illegal drugs? Yes No Not Sure
- Have you ever shared equipment (needles, syringes, cotton, water, etc.) when injecting drugs with someone else? Yes No Not Sure
- Have you ever lived with a person who has hepatitis B virus infection? Yes No Not Sure
- Have you ever had blood-to-blood contact with another person? Yes No Not Sure
- Have you had more than one sex partner during a six-month period? Yes No Not Sure
- Have you ever had sex without a condom? Yes No Not Sure
- Were you ever on dialysis? Yes No Not Sure
- Have you shared a toothbrush, razor, or any other item that may have had blood on it (visible or not) with a person that has hepatitis B or C or HIV? Yes No Not Sure
- Have you had blood tests that showed a liver problem? Yes No Not Sure
- Have you or your sex partner had a sexually transmitted disease? Yes No Not Sure

(Citation: Immunization Action Coalition, April 2001)

Please check if you would like to be tested for:

Blood Test

- Hepatitis B
- Hepatitis C
- HIV (can also be done with an oral swab)
- Syphilis

Other STDs (requires a pelvic or genital exam)

- Chlamydia
- Genital Warts [Human Papillomavirus (HPV)]
- Gonorrhea
- Herpes
- Trichomonas

Please check if you have been diagnosed with any of the following:

- Hepatitis B
- Hepatitis C
- HIV



