make people aware of the risks, and support drug users who want to break their addicition. Pregnant women who may be HIV positive can be treated with anti-retroviral drugs to reduce the risk of passing HIV to their baby.

One in every four or five babies born to women living with HIV will be infected with HIV. The risk is higher if the birth is long and difficult. All pregnant women should receive ante-natal care if possible.

A women who discovers she has HIV while she is pregnant must take very good care of her health. In many countries drugs known as anti-retrovirals are given to pregnant women to reduce the risk of the baby being born with HIV.

A women who already knows she has HIV must consider her choices very carefully before becoming pregnant. If she has a baby her own health is likely to suffer, and she may develop AIDS more quickly. She is more likely to have health problems during pregnancy. In addiction her baby, even if free of the virus, will grow up without a mother in later life.

Breast-feeding can also pass on HIV to the baby. However, the benefits of breast-feeding are so great that it is usually recommended to breast-feed the baby for five to six months and then to stop completely. During these first five to six months it is recommended that the baby is given no other food or drink except breast milk. The risk of the virus being passed on is then greatly reduced. The risk of infection from breast-feeding for up to six months is that 1 in every 20 babies is likely to become infected with HIV. However, if additional water or food is given or if the mother's nipples become cracked or bleed, the risk of infection increases.

Healthy eating is important for everyone. However, as HIV damages the body's ability to fight infection, it is really important for people with HIV to eat foods that help the body to stay healthy. Some of these, such as eggs, meat and milk may cost more money. Others, such as green vegetables, beans, fruits and pulses may not cost much. Dark green leafy vegetables, including many traditional vegetables, are particularly high in vitamins and minerals that give protection against illness. Try not to overcook vegetables because prolonged cooking destroys some vitamins. Add onions, tomatoes or oil to improve their flavour if necessary.

People living with AIDS often suffer from throat infections and loss of appetite. They should be encouraged to eat small amounts of tasty food regularly. Food with plenty of liquid, such as soups and stews, are easy to eat and digest. Fresh green leaves can be chopped finely and added.

Some people think that HIV and AIDS only affect people who have done something wrong. This is not true. We have no right to criticise others. HIV can affect any of us. Our attitude towards everyone should be one of compassion and love.

HIV always leads to an early death. We all die, sometimes unexpectedly. We all need to show love and care and fight against negative attitudes, blame and misunderstandings in our community and in our ourselves. We need to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves. Those of us living with HIV and AIDS are valued and important members of the community.

Information Courtesy " Responding more effectively to HIV and AIDS" A Pillars Guide Tearfund

HIV & AIDS

Some Facts You Need To Know

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GAWEYLON TIBETAN RADIO PROGRAMME
POST BOX NO. 286
DEHRADUN GPO-248001
UTTARAKHAND
INDIA

E-mail- gaweylon@gmail.com
Website-www.gaweylon.com
You can call or SMS us at +91 7417065068

THE HIDDEN SPREAD OF AIDS

AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) is the name given to the fatal condition that results from long - term infection with HIV (Human Immuno-deficiency Virus). Normally, the body can defend itself against many diseases. But, HIV/AIDS causes the body's natural defences to fail.

The person may die because the body's immune system cannot fight infections such as tuberculosis and diarrhoea, against which the body can normally defend it self.

Most infections such as measles, flu or colds spread very quickly. One person catches the infection and passes it to others within a few days. Then, unless they are very weak, they recover quickly.

However, AIDS is very different. It is caused by a virus called the Human Immuno - deficiency Virus (HIV). The virus attack cell in the blood that help the body fight off infection. This virus is very unusual because it can take many years to cause serious damage to the body. People with the virus usually do not know they are infected and look healthy. There is no cure for this virus.

Once a person is infected by HIV, it slowly damages their body's ability to fight off infection. This may take three or four years in a weaker person and ten or more years in a healthy person. They begin to suffer more from common infections and diseases such as tuberculosis (TB), skin and throat infections, fevers, skin cancer, pneumonia and diarrhoea. Once this happens, a person becomes very weak, they have now developed AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome). This means that HIV has seriously damaged the body's ability to fight disease. Without treatment, most people will die within a short span of time.

We may know of a few people seriously ill and dying from AIDS. However, we cannot know who is infected by HIV because they still look healthy.

HIV is unusual because it can infect others only when blood or body fluids are passed from an infected person to another person. This can happen during sex, when needles are shared, during childbirth, breast- feeding, blood transfusions or when sharp blades are used on more than one person, for example during circumcision or ear piercing.

The risk of infection during sex is higher for women than for men. It increases if sexually transmitted diseases are present. Once people are infected with HIV, they can still continue to be infected with other strains of HIV, which increase the risk of AIDS developing more rapidly.

However, it is impossible to became infected with HIV through activities such as hugging, shaking hands, coughing, sharing cups and plates or toilets. None of these activities can pass on HIV, even when a person is dying from AIDS. Health workers caring for people with AIDS are very unlikely to become infected if they take care with blood and body fluids.

Those of us who are living with HIV may look healthy, feel healthy and often do not know we are infected with HIV. In some countries one in every four or five people is living with HIV. It may take many years before they develop AIDS. During those years they can pass on HIV to many others. There are a number of ways to avoid HIV infection.

1. Both partners should stay faithful to each other in a sexual relationship.
2. If one partner may be infected with HIV, use condoms to stop the other partner becoming in fected.
3. Avoid situations which encourage sexual temptation.
4. Make sure that blood for transfusions is tested for HIV.
5. Avoid sharing needles, razors, blades or tooth brushes (because people's gums may bleed).
6. When caring for someone with HIV or AIDS wear gloves or plastic bags on hands when handling blood or body fluids. Soak clothes which are stained with blood or body fluids with bleach before washing. Keep cuts or sores on the hands covered.

Many people become infected with HIV through sex. For two people in a sexual relationship to avoid infection, they both have to be free of HIV and stay faithful and committed to each other.

People need to care about each other and their future. We can support each other in avoiding HIV by sharing knowledge and information. Young couples may agree together that they will wait for a sexual relationship until they are married. The more people can talk openly about the risks of HIV infection and sex, the more they can help each other to try to stay free of infection. Condoms can greatly reduce the risk of infection from HIV and their use should be discussed.

People who share needles for drug - taking are at great risk from HIV infection. We can work to make clean needles and syringes available. We should