



| Resources |

## Useful Contacts and Internet Sites

### *Peer Support*

**Positive Women Victoria** (Vic, Australia) [www.positivewomen.org.au](http://www.positivewomen.org.au)  
Coventry House, Suite 1, 111 Coventry St, Southbank, 3006  
Phone: 03 9863 8747

Positive Women Victoria provides peer support, referral and information for women living with HIV.

**POZHETS Heterosexual HIV/AIDS Service - HHAS** (NSW, Australia)  
[www.pozhet.org.au](http://www.pozhet.org.au)

Redfern Community Health Centre, Redfern Street, Redfern, 2016  
Phone: 02 9395 0444 FREECALL: 1800 812 404 (country NSW)  
HHAS aims to address issues related to HIV and heterosexuality, to reduce negative implications of HIV diagnosis and promote a healthy way of living.

**Straight Arrows** (Vic, Australia) [www.straightarrows.org.au](http://www.straightarrows.org.au)  
Coventry House, Suite 1, 111 Coventry St, Southbank, 3006  
Phone: 03 9863 9414

Straight Arrows offers peer support, information, advocacy, health promotion and referrals for HIV-positive heterosexual and bisexual men, women, their partners and families.

**Women's Health Statewide - Women's HIV Project** (SA, Australia) [www.whs.sa.gov.au](http://www.whs.sa.gov.au)

64 Pennington Terrace, North Adelaide, 5006 Phone: 08 8239 9600  
Free call 1800 182 098 (outside metro Adelaide)

A service of the SA Health Department to support HIV- positive women, build community and advocate for gender equity.

### *Other Social Support*

**CAN - Country Awareness Network** (Vic, Australia) [www.can.org.au](http://www.can.org.au)  
34 Myers Street, Bendigo. Phone: 03 5443 8355 or 03 5443 2299

CAN provides information, education, support, referrals and advocacy to Victorian rural communities regarding HIV, Hepatitis C, other blood borne viruses and sexually transmitted infections.

**Catholic HIV/AIDS Ministry** (Vic, Australia) [www.ccam.org.au](http://www.ccam.org.au)  
St Mary of the Cross Centre, 23 Brunswick St, Fitzroy, 3065  
Phone: 03 8417 1280

The Catholic HIV/AIDS Ministry offers practical, spiritual and emotional support to people infected or affected by HIV and AIDS.

**HIV CALD Service** (Vic, Australia) [multiculturalservice@alfred.org.au](mailto:multiculturalservice@alfred.org.au)  
Alfred Hospital, Fairfield House, Moubay St, Prahran, 3181  
Phone: 03 9076 3942

The HIV CALD Service provides support to individuals living with HIV from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to maintain their health and wellbeing and understand HIV.

**Multicultural Health and Support Service - MHSS** (Vic, Australia)  
[www.ceh.org.au/mhss.aspx](http://www.ceh.org.au/mhss.aspx) Phone: 03 9418 9909

MHSS provides information and support to individuals, families and communities on HIV, blood-borne viruses and sexually transmissible infections.

**Multicultural HIV and Hepatitis Service** (NSW, Australia)  
[www.mhahs.org.au](http://www.mhahs.org.au) Phone: 02 9515 1234

The Multicultural HIV and Hepatitis Service works to respond to HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C among culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

**Positive Living Centre (Vic, Australia)** [www.vicaids.asn.au](http://www.vicaids.asn.au)  
51 Commercial Rd, Prahran, 3181 Phone: 03 9863 0444  
The Positive Living Centre is a community centre for people living with HIV. It aims to enhance health and wellbeing through social, emotional, recreational and skills-based services and activities.

## *Counselling Services*

**Melbourne Sexual Health Centre (Vic, Australia)** [www.mshc.org.au](http://www.mshc.org.au)  
580 Swanston St, Carlton 3053 Phone (03) 9341 6200  
Appointments can be made by phone, no referral necessary. This is a free service.

**Positive Counselling - Victorian AIDS Council (Vic, Australia)**  
Phone: (03) 9865 6700 or 1800 134 840 (free call for country callers). The first session is free. From then on, fees are based on a scale depending on your income. A gold coin donation is the fee for Healthcare Card holders and those on a Disability Support Pension.

## *Information*

**Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations - AFAO (NSW, Australia)**  
[www.afao.org.au](http://www.afao.org.au)  
PO BOX 51, Newtown, 2042 Phone: 02 9557 9399  
AFAO is the national federation for the HIV community response. It provides leadership, coordination and support to Australia's policy, advocacy and health promotion response to HIV.

**Australasian Society for HIV Medicine - ASHM (NSW, Australia)**  
[www.ashm.org.au](http://www.ashm.org.au)  
Level 7, 46-56 Kippax St, Surry Hills, 2010  
ASHM is a peak organisation of health professionals in Australia and New Zealand who work in HIV, viral hepatitis and sexually transmissible

infections. ASHM draws on its experience and expertise to support the health workforce and to contribute to the sector, domestically and internationally.

**AVERT (UK)** [www.avert.org](http://www.avert.org)

AVERT provides a wide range of information to educate people about HIV and AIDS across the world. AVERT's Information and Advocacy Service also provides help and advice to the general public through specific enquiries, as well as campaigning for improved responses on specific issues, such as preventing children being born with HIV.

**Education Resources Centre - ERC (Vic, Australia)** [www.hivhepsti.info](http://www.hivhepsti.info)  
Alfred Hospital, Fairfield House, Moubay Street, Prahran, 3181  
The ERC is a free, state wide community service for all Victorians that provides information on HIV and AIDS, hepatitis and sexually transmissible infections.

**The Body (USA)** [www.thebody.com](http://www.thebody.com)

A web-based source of HIV and AIDS information. Read, listen or watch the latest HIV news, research and resources.

**Victorian AIDS Council (Vic, Australia)** [www.vicaids.asn.au](http://www.vicaids.asn.au)  
6 Claremont Street, South Yarra, 3141 P hone: (03) 9865 6700  
VAC leads the fight against HIV in Victoria by providing care and support for people living with HIV, health promotion, and advocacy.

## *Advocacy*

**Asia Pacific Network of People living with HIV - APN+**  
[www.apnplus.org](http://www.apnplus.org)

APN+ is the regional network and collective voice for people living with HIV in Asia and the Pacific. APN+ supports regional responses to widespread stigma and discrimination and better access to treatment and care.

**Global Network of People Living with HIV - GNP+** [www.gnpplus.net](http://www.gnpplus.net)  
GNP+ is the global network for and by people living with HIV. GNP+ advocates to improve the quality of life of people living with HIV. As a network of networks, GNP+ is driven by the needs of people living with HIV worldwide.

**International Community of Women living with HIV - ICW Global** [www.icwglobal.org](http://www.icwglobal.org)  
As a network, ICW contributes towards securing and improving the quality of life for women living with HIV.

**Living Positive Victoria (Vic, Australia)** [www.livingpositivevictoria.org.au](http://www.livingpositivevictoria.org.au)  
Coventry House, Suite 1, 111 Coventry St, Southbank Vic 3006  
Phone: 03 9863 8733  
Living Positive Victoria is a community-based organisation that works to advance the human rights and wellbeing of people living with HIV. Its mission is to educate, support and advocate on behalf of all people living with HIV in Victoria.

**National Association of People with HIV Australia - NAPWHA** [www.napwa.org.au](http://www.napwa.org.au)  
Suite G5, 1 Erskineville Road, Newtown, 2042 Phone: (02) 8568 0300 or Freecall\* 1800 259 666 (rural callers)  
NAPWHA provides advocacy, representation, policy, health promotion and outreach on a national level. NAPWHA contributes to clinical and social research into the incidence, impact and management of HIV.

**THE WELL PROJECT (USA)** [www.thewellproject.org](http://www.thewellproject.org)  
The Well Project is a non-profit organisation whose mission is to change the course of the HIV pandemic through a unique and comprehensive focus on women and girls.

## *Chat Rooms*

**HIV Chat (USA)** [www.hivchat.org](http://www.hivchat.org)  
The solution to HIV and AIDS lies in the millions of pieces of information scattered throughout the world. Knowledge is the key and the power to survive.

**HIV Network (India)** [www.hiv-network.com](http://www.hiv-network.com)  
Encourages all people who are drug users, people living with HIV as well as activists to join this e-network to share their common problems and issues.

**HIV/AIDS Positive Stories (Australia)** [www.hivaidspositivestories.com](http://www.hivaidspositivestories.com)  
Browse through the collection of hundreds of stories and feedback pages from people around the world who are affected or infected by HIV.

**HIV/AIDS Tribe (USA)** [www.hivaidstribe.com](http://www.hivaidstribe.com)  
HIV/AIDS Tribe is an online support community offering help with Support Groups, Life with HIV, Forums, Chat Rooms, Blogs, Games.

## *Internet Dating Sites*

**Positive Singles (USA)** [www.PositiveSingles.com](http://www.PositiveSingles.com)  
An online home for dating with HIV.

**Poz Match (USA)** [www.PozMatch.com](http://www.PozMatch.com)  
PozMatch is an HIV- positive owned social and HIV dating community for people who are interested in meeting others for friendship, companionship, and of course, love.

**Poz Vibrations (Australia)** [www.PozVibrations.com](http://www.PozVibrations.com)  
PozVibrations provides a simple and real way to meet others who will not reject you due to your HIV status.

## *HIV and the Law*

**HIV/AIDS Legal Centre - HALC (NSW, Australia)** [www.halc.org.au](http://www.halc.org.au)

414 Elizabeth St, Surry Hills, 2010

Phone: 02 9206 2060; Freecall: 1800 063 060

The HIV/AIDS Legal Centre is a community legal centre that specialises in HIV related legal matters. HALC recognises that people living with and affected by HIV have special legal needs.

**HIV Justice Network (International)** [www.hivjustice.net](http://www.hivjustice.net)

The HIV Justice Network is a global information and advocacy hub for individuals and organisations working to end the inappropriate use of the criminal law to regulate and punish people living with HIV.

## *Research*

**HIV Futures (Vic, Australia)** [www.latrobe.edu.au/hiv-futures/](http://www.latrobe.edu.au/hiv-futures/)

The Australian Research Centre in Sex Health and Society at La Trobe University collects evidence that increases understanding of communities at risk of infection and affected by HIV through its “HIV Futures” research project. This research seeks to investigate sexual and social practices of people living with HIV in Australia within the contexts of everyday lives, broader social structures and social histories, and to analyse the health and social environment of people living with HIV.

**FOR STATE SPECIFIC SERVICES:**

Contact your local AIDS council.

“Next Steps” – A resource produced by AFAO that has a basic list of Support Services for positive people State by State [http://www.afao.org.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0020/4709/NextSteps.pdf](http://www.afao.org.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/4709/NextSteps.pdf)

## Understanding Test Results- The Basics

This is a very basic explanation of what is important to look at in your test results. If you want to know more:

- You can ask your doctor to go through your results with you.
- AFAO and NAPWHA have a resource called “HIV Tests and Treatment” that goes into more detail.

The aim of HIV treatment is a viral load that is so low that it cannot be detected by current tests.

The trend of your viral load and CD4 OVER TIME is what is important - not an individual test result.

The viral load test, CD4 counts and CD4 percentage results will help to determine:

- a. the level of activity of the virus in your bloodstream;
- b. the amount of damage to your immune system;
- c. when to start antiretroviral treatment or
- d. if the current antiretroviral treatments are working or if it may be necessary to change treatments;

### **The CD4 count test**

A CD4 or T-cell count tells you the number of CD4 cells in a sample of your blood. There are two main types of CD4 cells: CD4 and CD8 or T-8 cells. CD4 are “helper” cells that attack infections. CD8 are “suppressor” cells that kill cells infected with a virus.

A general guide to CD4 test results is:

- 500 to 1,350 CD4 is the ‘normal’ range for adults;
- more than 500 CD4 shows little or no immune system damage;
- between 500 and 250 CD4 cells shows some damage but it is not likely you will be at risk of major opportunistic infections; (common bugs may use this ‘opportunity’ to cause disease)
- less than 250 CD4 shows more serious immune system damage and that you could be at risk of serious opportunistic illnesses.



### **The CD4% test**

The CD4 percentage tells you how many CD4 cells you have, relative to other immune-system cells. A CD4 percentage gives a clearer picture of the condition of your immune system as CD4 count can vary from day to day. The percentage is more an indication of the stability of CD4 count over time, rather than the actual CD4 count.

### **The viral load test**

The viral load test measures the quantity of HIV in the blood. Less than 50 copies/mL of HIV is “below the limit of detection,” or “undetectable.” This means there is not enough HIV for the test to measure. It does not mean that you no longer have HIV or that you can’t pass it to others.

### **Summary**

- The aim of HIV treatment is a viral load that is so low that it cannot be detected by current tests.
- CD4 cell counts and viral load will vary naturally – you and your doctor will look at trends, not single test results.
- An undetectable viral load does not mean that you no longer have the HIV virus or that you can’t pass it to others, it means that there isn’t enough of the virus present for the tests to measure

### **As a guideline:**

When you are not on HIV medication, your doctor will pay more attention to your CD4 (T-cell count) and CD4 % than your viral load. When you are on treatments, your doctor will focus more on your viral load as an indicator of how your body is responding to the treatments.

## **HIV Myths and Facts \***

**HIV:** stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus.

### **What Is It?**

HIV is a virus contained in the blood, semen, vaginal fluids or breast milk of an infected person.

Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) is a term which applies to the most advanced stages of HIV infection. It is defined by the occurrence of any of more than 20 opportunistic infections or HIV-related cancers.

### **How Is It Transmitted?**

HIV is transmitted when blood, semen or vaginal fluids pass from an infected person into the bloodstream of another person.

Any activity must meet these conditions to allow HIV to be transmitted.

For example:

- Sexual transmission via vaginal or anal penetration without a condom is a risk activity (semen and vaginal fluids).
- Sharing injecting needles and syringes is a risk (blood).
- Babies can acquire the virus from an HIV- positive mother during birth and the virus could pass from mother to baby in breast milk.
- HIV through oral sex presents extremely low risk.
- Saliva is NOT a means of transmitting the virus. Kissing presents NO RISK.

The virus is very fragile and upon contact with the air is generally not viable for the purpose of transmission. This is why the commonest way of transmitting HIV is during sexual intercourse (either vaginal or anal) with a person living with HIV.

### **Sharing needles and syringes**

There is a risk of transmission of HIV by sharing needles or syringes during injecting drug use when the virus may survive a short time in the airtight syringe or barrel of the needle. Sharing injecting equipment much more easily transmits other viruses such as hepatitis B and C.

### **Birth and Breastfeeding**

Mother to baby transmission can happen but is now quite rare, especially if the mother is on antiretroviral medications which reduce her viral load at the time of birth.

Breastfeeding increases the risk of transmission of HIV from mother to infant. HIV-positive mothers are encouraged to avoid breastfeeding and use formula milk instead. Replacing breastfeeding with formula milk is a safe practice in Australia where safe water and good quality infant formula are readily available.

### **Blood Transfusions**

As far as blood transfusions are concerned, in Australia the blood bank has been screening supplies since May 1985. Donating blood in Australia is perfectly safe as fresh equipment is always used for each new donor.

### **Vaginal Sex**

#### **Passive (Receptive female partner)**

HIV in cum or pre-cum during penile penetration can easily enter the bloodstream through the lining of the vagina. Having your sex partner use a condom with a water-based lubricant is the best way to reduce the risk of getting or passing on HIV.

#### **Active (Insertive male partner)**

Penetrating a woman without using a condom is another likely way of transmitting HIV. Many men believe that because they are the one doing the inserting, HIV cannot enter their bloodstream, but it can. HIV in vaginal fluids can enter the penis through the opening.

### **Anal Sex**

#### **Passive (Receptive male or female partner)**

Being anally penetrated by a man who is not using a condom is the most likely way of transmitting HIV. HIV in cum or pre-cum can enter the bloodstream through the lining of the anus.

#### **Active (Insertive male partner)**

Anally penetrating someone else without using a condom is another likely way of transmitting HIV. Many men think that because they are the one doing the penetrating, HIV cannot enter their bloodstream, but it can. HIV can enter the penis through the opening at the tip via blood from small cuts or scratches in the lining of the anus.

### **Oral Sex**

Oral sex is not a significant mode of transmission.

There is potential for transmission to the person giving fellatio (the person sucking or licking the penis) because pre-cum or semen can get into the mouth. A healthy mouth is generally a hostile environment for HIV, because an enzyme in saliva has been shown to inhibit HIV. In order for infection to occur, HIV must enter the bloodstream, most obviously through a breached mucosal surface in the mouth. These factors give HIV a poor success rate in the mouth. It is most likely that transmission will only occur when the receptive person's mouth or throat has been breached in some way, allowing HIV to enter the bloodstream. Such breaches include the presence of dental disease, bleeding gums or mouth ulcers.

There is an extremely small risk of transmission of HIV by performing cunnilingus (licking the clitoris and/or in or around the vulva) because vaginal fluid and blood can get in the mouth, which is a hostile environment for HIV.

### **Penetrative sex and withdrawal**

Withdrawing before ejaculation does not reduce the possibility of transmitting HIV. This is essentially as risky as completely unprotected sex due to the presence of pre cum.

### **Body piercing and tattoos**

Piercing and tattooing shops should be registered with their local council and should therefore practice standard precautions in terms of infection control. Only sterilised needles, instruments and jewellery should be used. HIV infections through piercing and tattoos will not occur if these requirements are met.

### **Insect bites**

One of the most prevalent myths about HIV transmission is that mosquitoes or other bloodsucking insects can infect you. Mosquitoes do not transmit HIV because they do not inject blood or the blood of an animal or person it has bitten into the next person it bites.

### **Needle stick injuries**

Needle stick injuries are wounds caused by needles that accidentally puncture the skin in a clinical setting. The risk of transmission after exposure to HIV-infected blood is about 0.3%.

### **Casual Contact**

HIV is not transmitted by day to day contact in the home, the workplace, schools, or social settings. HIV is not transmitted through shaking hands, hugging or a casual kiss (or even “French kissing”). You cannot become infected from a toilet seat, a drinking fountain, a doorknob, dishes, drinking glasses, food or pets.

### **Biting**

It is very unlikely that a person would get HIV from a human bite. HIV can only be passed in this manner through direct blood-to-blood contact and not by exchanging saliva.

### **Other sexually transmitted infections**

Individuals who are infected with STIs (sexually transmitted infections) are at least two to five times more likely than uninfected individuals to acquire HIV if they are exposed to the virus through sexual contact. In addition, if an HIV- positive has another STI, that person is more likely to transmit HIV through sexual contact than other HIV- positive persons.



Suite 1, 111 Coventry Street, Southbank VIC 3006

Tel: (03) 9863 8747

<http://www.positivewomen.org.au>



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