

Let's Talk about HIV/AIDS

English Version

By The Moon Admirer

Many people today have heard of HIV/AIDS. "HIV" is the virus that may later lead to "AIDS". Briefly, HIV can be spread and contracted through the following ways:

1. Unprotected sex: heterosexual, gay or lesbian,
2. Sharing injecting equipment like needles,
3. Using non-sterilised tattooing or body piercing equipment,
4. Mother to child during pregnancy, childbirth or breast feeding.

It is clearly seen that high-risk groups are not only limited to sex workers or people who inject drugs (PWID). Engaging in these activities increases the likelihood of contracting HIV and is therefore seen as high-risk behaviors. One should not forget that today there has not been any vaccine to prevent the infection of HIV/AIDS. Moreover, there is still no treatment to eradicate HIV/AIDS. Prevention is still the best treatment.

● Always use a condom and water-based lubricant during sex. Female condoms are also available in Australia, as well as dental dams for oral sex. Ask your doctor, a health care worker or one of the RhED staff.

● Never share injecting equipment and always use new syringes. The RhED Program at 10 Inkerman Street, St Kilda has a needle and syringe program (NSP) where free injecting equipment can be picked up and used ones returned.

● Always go to a licensed tattooing and body-piercing studio, where needles and other equipment are properly sterilised and discarded.

● If you are HIV positive and you become pregnant or, you are not sure about your health status and plan for pregnancy, you should see your doctor as soon as possible.

Blood transfusion can be a high-risk in some overseas countries. In Australia however, all blood and blood products are safe. Screening and testing for HIV have been in place since 1985. People who are HIV positive however, cannot donate blood. HIV/AIDS is recognized by the United Nations as a global epidemic. Residing in Australia where the prevalence is relatively low does not mean you will have less of a chance of contracting the virus than living in a country with higher incidents of HIV transmissions. For example, Thailand has the highest HIV/AIDS prevalence in South East Asian. In 2001 there were 700,000 people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA). In Australia there are about 15,000 people living with HIV/AIDS.

In a country like Australia issues of confidentiality and discrimination against HIV/AIDS are important. It is against the law to disclose personal information without consent. Unless a HIV positive person gives permission, telling someone else about that person's HIV status is an offence. It is against the law to treat unfairly or discriminate against any person who is HIV positive. PLWHA can make applications to complain to authorities like the Equal Opportunity Commission/Anti-Discrimination Board in any State or Territory.

HIV/AIDS services in Victoria provide health care services, counselling and free and confidential information. Some places may not require a Medicare card. For more information or for medical advice contact:

Melbourne Sexual Health Centre

580 Swanston Street, Carlton
Phone (03) 9347 0244
Monday to Thursday 9:00 am to 12:30 pm
Friday 1:30 pm to 5:00 pm
No appointments are necessary

Victoria Aids Council (VAC) at

6 Claremont Street South Yarra
Phone (03) 98656700
Toll Free number 1800 134 840

Other related services are also available from

RhED (03) 9534 8166

10 Inkerman Street St Kilda
Tue-Fri 10 am to 1 pm appointment only
Tue-Fri 1:00 pm to 5 pm drop-in open

***Also available:**

Tue 2-5 pm ***Drug and Alcohol Counselor***
Wed 2-5 pm ***Physio and Podiatry***
Thu 3:30 pm - 7 pm ***Melbourne Sexual Health Clinic (MSHC)***

(A free and confidential medical service)

Thu 5:30 pm - 7 pm St Kilda Legal Service

Fri 8:30 - 11 pm MSHC nurse

(A free and confidential medical service)

*Advice, information or support on any number of issues like your health, work problems, financial issues, immigration or the law is available, regardless of where you work or where you are in Victoria. Referrals to other services as well as support provided are all free and confidential. Appointments are not necessary.

For information in Thai visit RhED's website : www.sexworker.org.au

To talk to Thai speaking worker contact;

Multicultural Health and Support Service (HIV, Hepatitis C and STI)

North Richmond Community Health Centre
23 Lennox Street Richmond
Phone (03) 9420 1375 Mobile 0438542835

Working Women's Health

192 High Street Northcote

