



PREVENTING HIV AND AIDS

THE IDEA

Young people's vulnerability to HIV infection depends on many complex factors. They need the information, life skills and motivation to avoid sex or to negotiate for safe sex. But, as importantly, they need a supportive environment in their families, schools and communities, where they will be able to get the advice and protection they need at this vulnerable stage in their lives. They need communities which will protect them from sexual abuse and peers groups which support their safe choices. Poverty and lack of opportunities may also lead children to survive through risky sexual activities, to get money or help. Adolescent girls are particularly at risk of HIV infection: in many countries they are two to seven times more likely than adolescent boys to be HIV positive. This is because girls are often brought up to be submissive and they do not know or are not able to assert their rights over their body. Schools, health services, local NGOs, traditional counsellors and other community members all need to be open to listening to young people's needs and providing the help they want.

Many countries now have a special syllabus for education on HIV and AIDS. There are many different sub-topics which need to be covered to enable young people to be healthy and safe. This Activity Sheet gives a general introduction to the issues and suggests ways in which learning about HIV and AIDS can be active and promote life skills.

Information alone is not enough to stop the spread of HIV. Life skills-based education is also vital for young people, since it helps them to develop skills in problem solving, decision making, communication, assertiveness, critical thinking, etc. These skills are integrated into the learning process suggested in these activities, along with ideas on how to build a more safe and supportive environment for young people.

Teaching about HIV and AIDS

This Sheet seeks to encourage teachers and other facilitators to think how they can approach the topic of HIV prevention to meet best the needs of young people in their community. The book **Child-to-Child Approaches to HIV and AIDS** provides more information on life skills-based learning about HIV prevention as well as care and support for children affected by HIV and AIDS. The topic of HIV and AIDS should not be taught in isolation. It is best if it is introduced within a course on the range of issues around relationships and sexual and reproductive health. This would include work on personal values, friendship, family relationships, puberty, love, reproduction, sexually transmitted infections, HIV and AIDS, and living well with HIV and AIDS. These topics are best taught through a life skills-based approach.

If you are in school, it is important to discuss your ideas for teaching this topic

with the head teacher. Also hold a meeting with parents and guardians to discuss with them why this topic is vital for children and adolescents and gain their consent and support.

All children and adolescents need to know about HIV and AIDS. The depth of knowledge and level of activities depends on their age, but remember that children and adolescents should know the information and have practised the life skills before they reach the age when they may start experimenting with sex. In the activities below, children and adolescents are all referred to as 'young people'. The age is not specified as this will depend on your context.

Basic information on HIV and AIDS:

HIV = Human Immunodeficiency Virus

AIDS = Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

ACTIVITY SHEET 7.3
CHILD-TO-CHILD TRUST

AIDS is a set of serious illnesses, caused by a virus called HIV, which destroys the body's natural protection from infection.

When HIV gets into the blood it attacks the immune system. After a long time, sometimes many years, the body can no longer defend itself against germs and the person becomes weak and very sick with different diseases. This is when we say that a person is sick with AIDS-related illness.

Anyone can get HIV: young and old, rich and poor. A person may look and feel healthy when living with HIV for many years before they become sick. However, during this time they can still pass on the HIV virus. New medicines can keep people with HIV healthier for longer periods. These are gradually becoming available in more countries.

How HIV is and is not spread

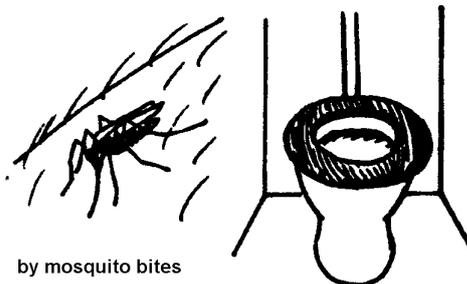
HIV is spread in the following ways:

- In most cases, HIV is passed from one person to another through unprotected sexual intercourse (without a condom), during which the semen, vaginal fluid or blood of an infected person passes into the body of another person.
- HIV can pass from one person to another through blood. This happens through a tiny amount blood left on needles and syringes, most often used for injecting drugs, when they are not sterilised after use. Razor blades, knives or other instruments that cut or pierce the skin also carry risk of spreading HIV. These days, most hospitals are careful to screen blood for HIV before giving blood transfusions.
- HIV can be passed from mother to baby during pregnancy, childbirth or breastfeeding. Doctors can advise mothers on how to reduce the risks to the baby, including using low-cost drugs around the time of birth.

HIV is not spread by:

- Touching those who are HIV positive
- Hugging and shaking hands
- Coughing and sneezing
- Sharing toilet seats or phones

- Sharing plates, glasses, eating utensils
- In swimming pools or public baths
- Mosquitoes.



by mosquito bites

from toilet seats



from telephones

by hugging



by kissing

by shaking hands



by sharing cups or cutlery

from coughing

It is safe to live and eat with someone who is HIV positive. It is safe to be friends with and go to school with someone who is HIV positive. What is most important is that people living with HIV and AIDS have the love, care and support of their families and friends.

Preventing the spread of HIV through sex

The risk of getting HIV through sex can be reduced when:

- people don't have sex
- uninfected partners only have sex with each other
- people have safer sex – without penetration or while using a condom. Correct and consistent use of condoms can save lives by preventing the spread of HIV.

People who have a sexually transmitted infection (STI) are at greater risk of getting HIV and spreading it to others. They should seek prompt treatment and avoid sex or practise safer sex – without penetration or while using a condom.

Testing for HIV

Anyone who suspects that he or she might have HIV should go to a special clinic for counselling to decide whether to have a blood test which checks for HIV. People will also be counselled when the results come. A person who has HIV is said to be HIV positive. They can live healthy and productive lives for many years, especially if they have the support of people around them. It is important for people to know if they are HIV positive, so that they can take good care of their health and protect others from infection. People cope best when they can talk openly about having HIV with family and friends. Most countries have support groups for people who are HIV positive. These groups often play a central part in HIV and AIDS education and care activities.

Supporting young people

Parents and teachers can help young people protect themselves from HIV by talking with them about how to avoid getting and spreading the disease. Girls are especially vulnerable to HIV infection and need support to protect themselves and be protected against unwanted and unsafe sex.

Young people also need friendly health services for counselling and access to condoms, if required. All people, including children, are at risk of HIV and AIDS. All young people need information and education about the disease and support to make safe choices and protection from abuse.

Helping young people affected by HIV and AIDS

Young people in families affected by HIV and AIDS need the care and support of

their parents or guardians, of friends, neighbours and teachers.

There are many other topics related to this issue, about challenging stigma and discrimination, about helping each

other to cope with loss and about planning for the future. See the last section on Other resources for ideas on this.



Activities

Before starting the topic

- Discuss with the young people what ground rules they want to have in place. These might include: listening respectfully to each other, confidentiality (not talking outside the sessions), the right not to participate in discussions. Also help the group to identify a safe and trusted adult to whom they can tell their concerns, especially if a child has suffered or is at risk of sexual abuse or other kinds of abuse.

Understanding

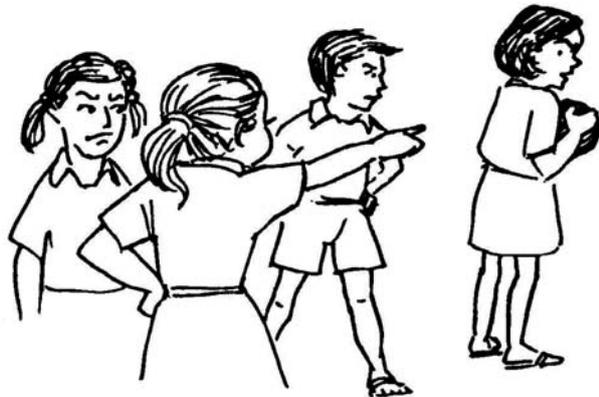
- Collect materials about HIV and AIDS. Learn as much as you can about the topic so that you will be able to answer the young people's questions.
- Design a questionnaire to find out what the young people already know about HIV and AIDS. Ask them to fill in the questionnaire anonymously (with no names). Afterwards go through to check that the answers are understood.
- Play a true/false game. Write down a series of true or false statements about HIV and AIDS on separate pieces of paper, e.g. You can catch HIV from mosquitoes (false); You can't catch HIV from shaking hands (true). On the floor mark three areas – TRUE, FALSE and DON'T KNOW. Each young person takes one statement, puts it in one of the three areas and explains the reason for their choice. Anyone else can challenge the decision.

ACTIVITY SHEET 7.3

CHILD-TO-CHILD TRUST

- Play the 'Lifeline' game to check that the young people know the facts about risky and non-risky behaviours. Draw a thick line on the floor and place three large cards along the line. Place card 1 'no risk' at one end, card 2 'some risk' in the middle and card 3 'high risk' at the other end. Think of about 12 relevant behaviours and write each one on a separate card, e.g. hugging, sharing a needle for injecting drugs, sexual intercourse without a condom, sexual intercourse using a condom correctly, abstaining from sex, kissing, being faithful to one faithful partner, sharing a toothbrush, having a vaccination with a sterilised needle, using a public toilet, kissing, sharing bath water, having a blood transfusion, shaking hands. Give each group of young people two to three cards. Ask them to discuss and decide whether each behaviour is no risk, some risk or high risk of passing on HIV. They then place their card on the lifeline and give their reasons. The other young people can comment. You also comment and ensure that the card is placed in the correct position on the line. Afterwards, the young people work in pairs to list the ways HIV is and is not spread.
- An alternative to the game above is to tell a story about an adolescent girl and boy. Add lots of details to the story – e.g. they like each other and one day they hold hands. The next time they meet, the boy wants to take the girl into the forest. At each behaviour stop the story. The young people then decide whether the behaviour is no risk, some risk or high risk of transmitting HIV. They hold up cards giving their response. Discuss and clarify the information, then continue with the story.
- In groups, young people can write quiz questions. Check that they are correct, then hold a quiz competition.
- Use pictures to help young people to imagine themselves in another person's position, e.g. a picture of someone caring for another who is sick, or a picture of a child being excluded from a game of

football. Ask the young people to imagine what it feels like to be each of the people in the picture. Ask questions about the events which led to this scene and what might happen in the future.



- In groups, the young people write down all the problems faced by children in families affected by HIV and AIDS. How can young people help each other to cope with these problems?

Finding out more

- Invite a health worker or NGO worker to visit the group. The young people can write up questions which are given to the visitor beforehand. Also during the session use an anonymous (no name) Question Box, so that the young people can add additional questions. The Question Box can be used throughout the campaign with the questions reviewed once a week.



- In many places people who are HIV positive have become activists and are willing to speak to young people about living healthily with the virus. The young people can write down their questions in advance. Tell the visitors and the children that the visitors can choose not to answer some questions.

- Young people can visit the health clinic to find out more about HIV and AIDS. How can people live healthily with HIV? What happens when a person has an HIV test? What medicines are available to help people with HIV and AIDS? How can young people help each other and their family members?
- Find out from newspapers the situation about HIV and AIDS in your country. What can be learnt from these articles? What attitudes are shown to people living with HIV? Is the health information correct?
- Find out about celebrities, such as singers or sports personalities, who have chosen to be open about living with HIV. How are they helping other people by being open about their status? How are they living well and healthily with HIV?
- Using the quiz questions developed earlier, the young people can do a survey find out how much their peers (not in this group) know about HIV and AIDS. They can find out what gaps there are in the others' knowledge.
- Find out what guidance their religious books give on caring for the sick and for orphans. How can this be applied to caring for people living with HIV and to orphans and other vulnerable children in the community?

Planning and taking action

- Using the results of the survey, the young people can plan an HIV and AIDS information fair. They can create puppet dramas, role-plays, posters, songs and stories to explain how HIV is passed on and how it can be prevented.
- Help the young people to prepare a short drama about how a boy or girl is being pressured to do a risky behaviour and ends up getting HIV. (Help the young people to think about the behaviours that are most common in their area.) Invite other young people to watch. When the drama has been performed once, ask the young people to do it again immediately – but this time ask the audience to put up

their hands to stop the drama whenever they see a chance for the drama character to do or say something different and avoid getting HIV. Invite the young person who has interrupted the play to come and take over the role and show what they would have done. The drama continues until the next interruption. In this way the young people can develop skills in identifying risks and in making good decisions. At the end broaden out the discussion.

- Discuss situations when it is sometimes difficult to refuse something and list the reasons. In pairs, the young people can role-play different situations. Imagine how someone might persuade them to do something risky and how they could refuse in a polite but firm way, e.g. when asked to have a cigarette; to accept a lift from a stranger; to have a drink of alcohol.
- Discuss and plan practical support that can be given to young people in families facing problems, such as great poverty, parents who are sick or have died, etc. Do they need help with school uniforms, books, soap, food? How can young people help each other? Make a practical plan of action for giving mutual support. This needs to be handled sensitively to make sure that all children feel included and not stigmatised.
- Start an HIV and AIDS Action Club. This can conduct activities on raising awareness about HIV and AIDS as well as helping each other in practical ways to cope with the impact of AIDS on their families and community.





- With more training and support, young people can become peer educators. Young people are often the most effective educators of their peers on matters of sexual health. Link this group of peer educators with the health workers so that together they can help make the health services more accessible and welcoming to young people.

Discussing results

- The young people can think about their activities in this topic and discuss:
 - What new things have we learned about HIV and AIDS?
 - Did our friends (not in our group)

learn more about HIV and AIDS? (They could repeat the quiz questionnaire at this stage.)

- Did people in the wider community understand the messages in our awareness-raising activities? How do we know?
- How do people in the wider community feel about young people being actively in HIV and AIDS activities?
- Should we repeat any activities or do other activities to reinforce the messages or address new issues related to HIV and AIDS? If so, what? How can we strengthen our activities?

- Do we have any other questions or fears about HIV and AIDS? Has the Question Box been used actively?

Doing it better

There are so many topics relating to the subject of HIV and AIDS. The young people will also have raised their own concerns. You can use this same active learning steps to address other topics – e.g. living healthily with HIV and AIDS; caring for someone who is sick; accessing treatment; challenging stigma and discrimination; preparing for the future, etc. There will be materials available in your own country on many of these issues. The Other resources section below includes some useful materials which are available internationally.

USING THE SHEET

Teachers, school counsellors and head teachers can use these ideas for developing an HIV and AIDS education programme in their schools. This can reinforce any topics on HIV and AIDS already in the curriculum.

Health workers and NGO workers with a focus on HIV and AIDS prevention can use these materials to work with young people in schools and youth groups. They can also use it to develop groups of peer educators amongst the young people.

The media can use these ideas to work with young people in developing programmes on HIV prevention for radio, TV and newspapers.

Other resources

- **The River of Hope: A manual on child-centred approaches to HIV and AIDS.** (2006) Published by Healthlink Worldwide, UK.
- **Building Blocks: Africa-wide briefing notes** (2003) **Building Blocks in Practice** (2005) **Building Blocks for Asia** (2005). Published by the International HIV/AIDS Alliance, UK.
- www.child-to-child.org – website of the Child-to-Child Trust for downloading their materials
- www.ovcsupport.net – a website on supporting orphans and other vulnerable children
- www.unaids.org – website of the United Nations programme on HIV and AIDS
- www.unicef.org/aids – the part of UNICEF's website for the HIV and AIDS work.
- This Activity Sheet can be used together with the Child-to-Child Activity Sheet 1.6 **Puberty, Parenthood and Sexual Health**
- **Child-to-Child Approaches to HIV and AIDS** (2005) Published by the Child-to-Child Trust, UK.
- **Choices: A guide for Young People** (1999) Published by Macmillan, UK.