

AIDS

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risk for AIDS.

A Center for Disease Control HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report released in November 1989 contained a breakdown on the groups most at risk of exposure to the HIV virus.

As of October 1989, 58 percent of adults and teenagers diagnosed with AIDS are men who have sex with men; 18 percent are people who inject drugs; 5 percent are heterosexuals; 2 percent are people receiving blood transfusions, blood components or tissue; 1 percent are people with hemophilia/coagulation disorders; and 3 percent are people who received the HIV virus from undetermined sources.

The number of gay men who are diagnosed as HIV positive has decreased since the gay community received information about how the virus is transmitted, said Emily Heilbrun, a client services coordinator for Shanti in Oregon.

However, the number of heterosexual men and women with the disease has increased. Heilbrun said this increase is mostly attributable to drug use.

There is now no longer any risk to hemophiliacs, she said.

According to a San Francisco AIDS Foundation statement, AIDS is not an easily transmittable disease. AIDS is not contagious like a cold. There is no evidence that AIDS is spread through air, water, food or casual body contact.

To get AIDS, one must first be infected with the HIV virus. The virus is spread through blood, semen and vaginal fluid, which must go directly from an infected person into another person.

The HIV virus can be transmitted through sex, the use of injection drugs and from a pregnant woman to her unborn child.

White Bird Clinic Coordinator John Shoemaker said pre-seminal, seminal and vaginal fluid must have the virus in enough concentration to expose someone. For heterosexual and homosexual couples, condoms are a fairly effective method of protection during intercourse if used correctly.

Condoms also are an effective method of protection during oral sex if the man is the recipient.

Gay men and bisexuals are especially at risk for the disease because of the delicate nature of the rectum, said Heather Penman, a former nurse and co-

ordinator for the Acorn Club, a recreational club for people who are HIV positive.

It's much easier for men to transmit the virus to women than it is for women to transmit the virus to men, Penman said.

"Through repeated anal sex you have a chance," Penman said. "The vagina has a tremendous blood flow. It is the perfect environment. It's very delicate."

Penman said college students may be especially at risk for contracting the HIV virus because the college years are often a time for experimentation.

"The largest spread of heterosexual AIDS is among teenagers," Penman said. "You just don't think about those things, you think about getting pregnant."

"Whoever you're sleeping with, you're sleeping with everyone they have ever slept with," he said.

Clarence Spigner, University assistant professor of school and community health, said he believes Penman's concept of the dangers of sex is a "bit much."

"If you kiss someone do you kiss every place their mouth has ever been?" Spigner asked.

He said he doesn't believe scare tactics are effective tools

in AIDS education.

"It's irresponsible to tell white middle class students 'if you have unprotected sex you're going to get AIDS,'" Spigner said. "I think they have more to worry about with herpes, syphilis and chlamydia."

Another way the HIV virus can be transmitted is through injection drug use. People who share needles also share blood and that blood may contain the HIV virus, said Heilbrun.

Heilbrun said injection drug users can protect themselves by

either not sharing their needles or by cleaning their needles with a mixture of bleach and water. Used needles should be flushed twice with bleach and twice with water, ending with the water to clean out the bleach. The bleach will kill the HIV virus, Heilbrun said.

The HIV virus can be transmitted through any of the drug user's "used works," she said. These works include: needles; syringes; cookers, which the drugs are prepared in; and cotton passed around to absorb blood.

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By GARY LARSON

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