

This leaflet gives general advice. For further information please ask either the nursing or medical staff who are providing your care and treatment or contact the Infection Prevention and Control Team on 01386 502552.

If you would like this leaflet in a different language, larger print size, in audio, Braille or any other format please contact the

PALS team by phone on

☎ 01905 760020;

by letter ✉ Communications,
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**Worcestershire
Health and Care**
NHS Trust



HIV INFECTION

What is it?

Your questions answered

**An Information Leaflet
for
Patients and Staff**

WHAT IS IT?

HIV infection is caused by a virus (Human Immunodeficiency Virus). It attacks the body's immune defence system. Some of those infected with HIV have severe damage to their immune system and are particularly at risk of life threatening infections and other illness.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Most people with HIV infection have no symptoms and may be unaware of being infected. HIV is usually diagnosed through a blood test.

IS IT INFECTIOUS?

A person can become infected with HIV if sufficient quantity of the virus gets into their blood stream. Blood, semen, vaginal fluids and breast milk are the only body fluids that are known to have passed on HIV.

HOW IS IT TRANSMITTED?

HIV can get into someone's bloodstream:

- Through unprotected sexual intercourse with an infected partner.
- By blood to blood contact with an infected person, e.g. sharing of contaminated needles or syringes.
- From an infected mother to her child during pregnancy, childbirth or by breast feeding.

There is no risk of transmission of HIV from normal social contact, or from sharing cups, plates, and cutlery, toilets or bathing facilities.

CAN TRANSMISSION BE PREVENTED?

Yes. Cuts and breaks on the skin should be covered with a waterproof dressing and protective clothing should be worn as appropriate when dealing with blood and other body fluids.

Safer sex (using condoms) will help prevent the spread of HIV.

In healthcare settings all donated blood is checked for the virus. Sterile needles and syringes are used for all injections.

IS THERE ANY TREATMENT?

People with HIV infection will remain infectious for life. Currently there is no vaccine or cure for HIV. It is possible however to receive specialist treatment and care. New anti retroviral therapies are effective at slowing down replication of the virus and enhancing quality and quantity of life.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE IF SOMEONE HAS THE ILLNESS?

People with HIV infection can work if they feel well enough to do so. The only exceptions are when HIV positive healthcare workers are involved in performing exposure prone invasive procedures in which case they should seek advice from Occupational Health.

Those involved in the care of a person with HIV infection should be sensitive to the individual's need for privacy and confidentiality.

