WOULD YOU EVER CONSIDER HAVING UNPROTECTED SEX?

☐ Yes  ☐ No  ☐ Maybe

50 things that everyone should know about HIV and AIDS
You may be thinking: What is the purpose of this brochure? Not AIDS again. This really does not concern me. I already know everything about this. My parents just want to ruin the fun of sex for me.

But before you put this brochure away, take a minute and answer the following questions:

1. **Would you prefer to have sex without a condom?**
   - Yes
   - No

2. **Can you get AIDS by French kissing?**
   - Yes
   - No

3. **Have you ever had anal sex without a condom?**
   - Yes
   - No

Have you answered any of these questions with a “yes”? Then you should think about the questions on the following pages!
In response to 1
If you have sexual intercourse with a partner who is infected with HIV you can catch it, even “the first time”. Please also read Question 8 of this brochure.

In response to 2
The saliva contains such small quantities of the HIV virus that it cannot be transmitted during a French kiss. Please also read Question 11 of this brochure.

In response to 3
If your partner is infected, there is a high risk of contracting HIV during anal sex without a condom. Please also read Question 10 of this brochure.

THREE SHORT ANSWERS
1 Why could I also be at risk?

AIDS is not an illness that is limited to the frequently quoted risk groups such as homosexuals, drug-users and prostitutes. HIV also does not have any age limit. Anyone can contract an infection with HIV, including you. The HIV virus, which is responsible for AIDS, is most frequently transmitted during unprotected sex with an infected partner. However, you cannot see whether someone is infected. Therefore, you should always protect yourself from a transmission of the virus during sex. Particularly, if you do not know your partner very well.

2 What exactly is AIDS?

AIDS is a weakness in the defence system, in other words a weakness of the body’s immune system. AIDS makes your body defenceless against bacteria, viruses and other germs that a healthy person can easily fight. Such infections can then become life-threatening.
3 What does AIDS stand for?

AIDS is an English abbreviation for “Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome”. A doctor will always talk about a syndrome where a group of symptoms consistently occur together. With regard to AIDS these could, for example, include:

- Infections such as tuberculosis, pneumonias, herpes infections
- Cancers
- Brain damage
- Unintentional weight loss

4 What are the typical symptoms of AIDS?

How will I know that I am infected? And what is HIV?

HIV is the virus that causes AIDS. HIV is also an English term, which is an abbreviation for “Human Immunodeficiency Virus”. It enters the cells of the human body, can lay dormant there for many years and will passively replicate during each host-cell division cycle. The body is unable to eliminate it from all of the cells, which makes the virus so treacherous.
5. **What is the difference between HIV and AIDS?**

If a person is HIV-positive, this means he is carrying the HIV virus in his body. But it does not mean that he has AIDS. A person will only have AIDS when he has (specific) symptoms as a result of the illness. This happens when the body’s own immune system has already been severely weakened by the continuous replication of the virus. If treatment is started early, an infection with AIDS is unlikely to occur for many years and decades, despite the HIV infection.

6. **Will I die if I am HIV-positive?**

No, compared to your friends your life-expectancy will almost be normal if you have started your treatment in good time and if you take your medication regularly. An HIV infection is now considered a chronic illness, comparable to asthma or diabetes.

7. **I thought only homosexuals, prostitutes and drug-users get AIDS!**

Anyone can catch HIV. HIV is found in the blood (including, the menstrual blood), in infected men’s semen and in infected women’s vaginal fluid. If the virus gets from these areas into the bloodstream of another person, this person will also be infected. This can happen, for example, if infected people share the same needle when they take drugs or do not use a condom during sex. In most cases HIV passes into the bloodstream through tiny injuries to the skin or the mucous membrane. Often, you will not even notice these injuries. (The virus may even be transmitted via the mucous membrane of the nose, for example if a plastic tube is shared by several people to snort drugs).

8. **Can I get infected the “first time”?**

Yes, HIV is most often transmitted during sexual intercourse without a condom. It doesn’t matter whether it is the first, second or tenth time. If your partner is infected and is not receiving medical treatment, you can catch HIV at any time when you have unprotected sexual intercourse. If a person is receiving treatment, the risk of an infection is lower, but not completely excluded.

9. **What is particularly risky?**

If you have spontaneous sex without a condom with someone you briefly met at a club or on holiday, or if you have sex with lots of different people, your risk of contracting an infection will increase. However, be aware that a serious relationship will also not protect you from catching an infection. Your partner may not know that he has caught the disease from a previous partner. For this reason, it is worth taking an HIV test. This test can even be taken anonymously and for free at the public health centre.
10 Does it matter what type of sex I have?

HIV is easily transmitted during anal sex because small injuries frequently occur during this type of sex. Vaginal sex is not as risky. A transmission during oral sex is unlikely, but cannot be excluded. In this case a transmission is most likely if the person simultaneously has a mouth infection.

11 Can I catch it from kissing?

No, the saliva only contains very, very low - if any - quantities of HIV. It would not be enough to catch the infection. Incidentally, this also applies to tears, urine and faeces.

It differs from the flu virus for example, as HIV is a virus that is difficult to transmit. This is why you do not have to be scared of being infected:

- When kissing, French kissing is also allowed
- If someone coughs or sneezes on you
- If you shake hands or hug someone
- If you share plates, glasses or cutlery with someone
- In the sauna or swimming pool
- If you share the same toilet
- If you are bitten by a mosquito, tick or any other blood-sucking insect.

Incidentally, the HIV virus cannot withstand exposure to heat or oxygen. As soon as the virus leaves the body and comes into contact with oxygen or is heated up (e.g. during cooking), it will die within a few minutes.

12 Do I have to take anything in particular into account if someone in my class or one of my acquaintances has HIV?

Yes, because these people are most often excluded or even bullied. If someone you know has HIV, you should treat him exactly as you would treat anyone else. HIV is not a reason to avoid anyone. On the contrary: Approach him, talk to him and let him know that he is not different. For people suffering from HIV, exclusion and condemnation (stigmatisation) are huge additional burdens on top of the disease.
What is safer sex?

“Safer sex” is the buzzword, when people talk about safe and protected sexual intercourse. When you have protected sexual intercourse, sperm and vaginal fluid do not enter your partner’s body. You can practice safer sex by

• not penetrating into your partner’s body. For example, limiting yourself to caressing and petting
• not swallowing sperm or vaginal fluid during oral sex - that is when the mouth is used during sex
• always using a condom during sexual intercourse

Do I really have to be that strict about safer sex? There aren’t that many people who are HIV-positive in Germany.

Naturally, there are countries where HIV is much more common than in Germany. But that does not mean that the disease cannot be transmitted in Germany when you have unprotected sex. The number of new infections in Germany has not decreased in recent years. This means you will only be safe from contracting an HIV infection if you observe the safer sex rules.

Safer sex will not only protect you from HIV, but also from sexually transmitted infections (STIs). This includes hepatitis or syphilis, for example. Although most cases of these infections are curable, they can nevertheless leave severe damage.

I feel embarrassed talking about sex!

Most people in serious relationships want to have sexual intercourse at some point. If you are no longer satisfied with caressing and petting, you should talk to your partner about the use of condoms. This is often easier said than done. However, in many cases your partner will be relieved if you approach the subject openly and you can both exchange views on the matter.
What is the best way to discuss the subject of safer sex?

Unfortunately, there are no standard formulas for the best way to discuss safer sex. But you might want to think about a few sentences in advance, e.g. “I would really like it if we used a condom.” or “Do you have a condom with you?” Try to explain to your partner that you trust him and that you want to take responsibility for your relationship. Naturally, you could also ask him for an up-to-date HIV test, however, note the HIV virus can only be detected in the blood after several weeks! The number of weeks depends on the test and can be between 6 and 12 weeks.

Are there any special things to note about condoms?

Condoms not only come in various colours and flavours, they also come in various sizes. The easiest way for you to find a condom that fits you is by measuring your hard penis in advance and then trying on different condoms. You can also use a special condom measuring tape, which is called a condometer. Go to www.kondometer.de for more information in this respect. When a condom is on properly you hardly notice it during sex and it is a reliable form of protection.

How do I use a condom properly?

Carefully open the condom wrapper. Once the penis is hard, squeeze the air out of the tip of the condom, push back the foreskin, place the condom on to the penis and carefully roll it all the way down. The rolled-up edge must be on the outside.

After sex you should pull the penis out of your partner’s vagina or anus before it goes soft. Hold the condom by the elastic ring so that it doesn’t slip off. You should wash your hands and your penis afterwards.

Is there anything else that I need to think about?

When you buy a condom you should look at the expiry date and look for the CE mark. Do not expose condoms to high temperatures (e.g. direct sunlight, heating) and pressure (e.g. if you keep it in your wallet or your back pocket). Otherwise, it may already be damaged before you use it.
20 What can I do if the condom breaks?

Even with the greatest care, accidents happen: The condom tears or slips off. In this case you should carefully wash the foreskin and the head of the penis and go to the toilet. Let the semen run out of the vagina. Vaginal or anal rinsing is not recommended. If sperm has entered your mouth, spit it out and rinse your mouth with water. What you should NEVER do: Put two condoms on top of each other. As a result of the friction created between the condoms it is very likely that BOTH will tear or burst! Exactly the same applies to oils instead of lubricants - why don’t you just try it: Blow up a condom and rub a little baby oil on it. The rubber will burst within a very short period of time.

21 Can I do anything else?

If you are worried that you might have caught HIV, contact a doctor as soon as possible. He can decide whether post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) would be beneficial to you. You will have to take HIV medication for four weeks, which will prevent the HIV virus from settling in your body. However, PEP must be started as soon as possible, preferably within 24 hours. Please go to www.aidshilfe.de/de/adressen/pep-kliniken for a list of hospitals that provide PEP 24 hours a day.

22 How will I know that I am infected with HIV?

In most cases you won’t notice an acute HIV infection. You may have symptoms similar to those that you would have with a flu, so these would be fever, headaches, aching limbs and swollen lymph nodes. But always remember that there are many more influenzas than newly diagnosed HIV infections. The only way to be sure is to take an HIV test.

23 What is an HIV test?

The HIV test will check whether your body makes antibodies against HIV. It may take several weeks for these antibodies to be made. This means that your test result will not be confirmed until after this time.

For the test, a blood sample will be taken from you and sent to a lab. The free and anonymous test at the public health centre takes about 4-5 working days. If this is too long for you to wait for the result you can also take a quick test at your doctor’s or at a regional AIDS help service. You will get the results within 30 minutes, but you will have to pay a fee for this. If the result is positive, it must be confirmed by a second test. Only then will it be considered sufficiently certain.
24 Can I take an HIV test on my own at home?

Although HIV self-test kits are available on the Internet, they are not legal in Germany as a result of their frequently incorrect results. Public health centres, AIDS information centres and doctors conduct HIV tests. This is where you can also get professional advice in a confidential environment.

25 What does an HIV test cost?

You can take an HIV test for free at the public health centre or for a fee (this usually varies between €20 and €30) at an AIDS information centre or a doctor’s practice. At the AIDS information centres and the public health centre you will remain anonymous, whereas the result will be noted in your medical records at your doctor’s.

26 Do my parents have to know that I am taking an HIV test?

No, public health centres, AIDS information centres and doctors perform the HIV test anonymously. Although your test result will be entered in your medical records, the doctor is bound to patient confidentiality. Each HIV test includes a local consultation with the doctor. During this consultation you can voice all of your questions and concerns - including in relation to your parents and how you can discuss your sexuality with them.

27 Can the HIV test also deliver incorrect results?

If evidence of HIV antibodies is found in your blood, a second test is always automatically performed in order to verify this result. Only if this test also shows an infection, you will be given the result “HIV positive”. If there is no evidence, the test result will be “negative”.

28 Why should I even take the test?

A test gives you certainty, even if you don’t think you have contracted HIV. If you have contracted an infection, the treatment can be started promptly and AIDS can be prevented for a long time. However, a test is not a precautionary measure. You can only protect yourself by having safer sex.

29 Can I be vaccinated against HIV?

No. Although many scientists are searching worldwide for an HIV vaccine, they have not yet found it.
30 So what should I do if the HIV test is positive?

A positive test result will certainly be a shock to you at first - but it is not the end of the world. A positive test result means that you are infected with HIV. It does not mean that you have AIDS or that you will get AIDS. If you start treatment early on and take your medication regularly, you can live well with HIV for many years and tens of years. Therefore, you should be examined by a doctor who is specialised in HIV. You can ask him all questions relating to your health. The best place to find a good specialist is at your local AIDS help service (www.aidshilfe.de/adressen).

31 Can I live my life the way I did before?

Naturally, the diagnosis “HIV positive” will change your life in many ways. But you do not have to be worried about this. Every chronic illness brings changes for the person suffering from it. For example, you will have to go to the doctor’s regularly, take medication and think carefully about your future. You should get help and support in this regard.

32 Where can I, as an infected person, get information?

A positive test result will raise many questions that not only relate to AIDS, but also to your wishes and your ideas of the future. In Germany, many cities have a local AIDS help service. You can go there and get advice - including anonymously - on all questions. You can also reach the German AIDS help service by telephone (Tel. 0180 3319411) or online at (https://aidshilfe.beranet.info/onlineberatung.html). The Federal Centre for Health Education (Bundeszentrale für gesundheitliche Aufklärung, BZgA) also offers an anonymous telephone advice line (Tel. 01805 555444) as well as online advice (http://www.aidsberatung.de).
What happens in the body during an HIV infection?

HIV infiltrates specific cells in your immune system, the T-helper cells (also called CD4 cells). The virus replicates billions of times per day (this is known as an increasing viral load) and destroys the cells. Initially, your immune system will keep producing new T-helper cells. Over time, however, as a result of this continuous new production, it will lose its reserves of strength. The number of T-helper cells in the blood decreases. The immune system is unable to fight off germs like it used to. This can result in life-threatening diseases and AIDS.

How exactly does this happen?

When HIV enters the cells of your body, it abuses the metabolism of the infected cells:

- HIV attaches to a host cell and merges together with it
- Then HIV uses its genetic material (RNA) and its enzymes in order to reprogram the infected cell
- The cell that is manipulated in this way produces new HIV viruses
- The tools, which the virus needs to do this, are called reverse transcriptase, integrase and protease

Where can I find other young adults who are HIV-positive?

It would be good to get help and support from other people of your age. You can get addresses for self-help groups and other interesting options such as youth camps for sufferers via the local AIDS help groups. There are also a number of interesting websites on the Internet for young people. The following websites may be able to help you:

- [www.sprungbrett.hiv](http://www.sprungbrett.hiv): On this site you can get in touch with people who will discuss their personal experiences about living with HIV with you.
- [www.testhelden.info](http://www.testhelden.info): This site is particularly aimed at younger homosexuals. It discusses any concerns about the HIV test and encourages you to take regular tests.
**36 Will I have to take medication all the time now?**

The drug treatment of an HIV infection ensures that the HIV viruses do not continue to multiply. Usually you will have to take medication that blocks the multiplication of the virus, once or twice a day. Such a treatment is called antiretroviral therapy (ART). You will undergo this therapy for the rest of your life as it is not yet possible to completely eliminate the HIV viruses from the body.

**37 What happens if I forget to take a tablet?**

HIV medication is only reliable if you take it regularly. If you frequently forget to take your medication, your body will not absorb enough of the medicine’s active ingredient. The HIV viruses can continue to multiply and there is a risk that the virus will become resistant to the medication.

**38 Do I have to observe anything when I take the medication?**

HIV medication may interact with other medicines that you may have to take. The result may be that the blood levels of the HIV medication decreases so that the virus may be given a new opportunity to multiply. However, the blood level may also increase so that you may suffer undesirable effects from the HIV medicines. You should inform the doctors in charge of the medicines that you are taking. They can then decide which medicine to prescribe for you.

Possible undesirable effects of the HIV medicines at the start of the therapy, include:
- Nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea
- Headache
- Tiredness, concentration problems
- Skin rashes

**39 What else can I do to improve my health?**

It is beneficial to everyone - with or without an HIV infection - to follow a healthy diet, to not smoke or take drugs, drink low amounts of alcohol and to exercise. This may already be natural to you. If not, think about whether you can change some things about your lifestyle in the future. This way you can strengthen your immune system so that your body can cope better with the HIV infection and other infections.

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**YES!** Balanced diet  
**NO!** Smoking harms

**YES!** Exercise  
**NO!** Lack of exercise
Can you have sex if you are HIV-positive?

Yes, even if you are HIV-positive, you can have sex. Firstly, if you observe the rules of safer sex, which means you don’t have unprotected sexual intercourse. Secondly, the risk of transmitting an HIV infection is very low if the HIV viruses can no longer be detected in the blood of the person who is HIV-positive as a result of the treatment. It is then below the detection limit. However, you should have a doctor check this regularly.

What does it mean to be below the detection limit?

Below the detection limit means that the HIV virus can no longer be detected in the blood by the usual laboratory methods. If you are below the detection limit you are generally not infectious.

Do I have to tell my boyfriend that I am HIV-positive?

You do not have to tell your boyfriend that you are HIV-positive. However, a relationship in which you cannot discuss such an important subject is unlikely to last. Naturally, you also have a responsibility to your partner. In Germany, if you transmit HIV intentionally or commit bodily harm through negligence this is punishable by law. (cf. section 229 of the StGB [Strafgesetzbuch [Code of Criminal Procedure]] and/or section 223, 224 (1) No. 5 of the StGB)

How difficult is it for people affected to discuss their infection openly?

For many people who are HIV-positive it is difficult to discuss their infection openly. They fear rejection and exclusion. HIV still conjures up fear and uncertainty in people. There are no easy answers to the question when and how you can discuss an HIV infection with other people. However, it is important that you are well informed and can answer any questions. Many people who are HIV-positive have then experienced that people deal with their infection as naturally as they would deal with other chronic illnesses.
44 Can I have children despite HIV?

Yes, an HIV infection will not prevent a pregnancy. However, you may be worried about infecting your partner. If you have been treated successfully with medication and you and/or your viral load is below the detection limit, you do not have to worry. It is very unlikely that you will infect your partner during sex without a condom.

People with HIV are no longer infectious to their partners after a successful treatment. Additionally, artificial insemination may be an option if you wish to have children. If the woman is infected, the man’s semen can be extracted from the condom with a syringe (without a needle) and then injected deep into the vagina.

45 What should I do if I want children?

Talk to your attending doctor and go with your partner to obtain full advice. Your doctor will be able to explain the different options and their consequences to you in detail.

46 And what happens to the unborn child?

A large number of preventative measures are taken so that the risk of transmitting HIV from a mother who is HIV-positive to the unborn child has been reduced to less than one percent in Germany. The doctor knows what you need to take into account. Let him advise you. For more information in this respect see www.gib-aids-keine-chance.de

47 On a job application, do I have to mention that I am HIV-positive?

You do not have to tell anyone about your HIV infection on a job application or during an interview. Even if you are specifically asked about it, you do not have to tell the truth. You also do not have to inform any future employers about your HIV infection.

48 What restrictions are there for my choice of jobs?

You are not limited in the choice of jobs as a result of the HIV infection. There is no risk of HIV transmission in general daily work. This applies to jobs in the health care industry, social professions, jobs in catering as well as all other professions.
49 Who do I have to inform about my infection?

You do not have to tell anyone that you are HIV-positive. However, it is often a relief if you can confide in a few good friends. They can support you and stand by you. Hiding the infection like a secret causes stress in many situations.

50 What does the red ribbon mean actually in connection with AIDS?

The red ribbon stands for global solidarity and humanity for people infected with HIV and AIDS. Wearing the red ribbon has the purpose of highlighting the social exclusion of the people concerned as well as the alarming spread of HIV.
YOU CAN GET HELP AND GET ADVICE HERE

www.aidshilfe.de
The website of the Deutschen AIDS-Hilfe e.V. (German AIDS help service) contains all information regarding HIV, hepatitis and sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

You will also find regional AIDS help centres on the subpage of the German AIDS help service https://www.aidshilfe.de/adressen

Do you need help or would you like to get involved? You will find the right contact person on the website of the AIDS Foundation: aids-stiftung.de

You will also be able to get more information on the pages of the Federal Centre for Health Education (BZgA). You can also download a number of information brochures or request them free of charge here:
Under the motto “Don’t give AIDS a Chance” the BZgA has been running an information campaign on HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) since the 90s: www.gib-aids-keine-chance.de

The new campaign of the BZgA with the title “Love life” gives you information about HIV, safer sex and sexually transmitted infections: www.liebesleben.de

On the website of the World AIDS Day you will find additional information about HIV and anti-discrimination as well as current events relating to HIV and AIDS: www.welt-aids-tag.de

Please go to www.aidsberatung.de for direct online advice.
**GLOSSARY**

**Immune deficiency:** See immune deficiency. The body’s own defence mechanisms are so weak that germs entering the body can no longer be safely eliminated.

**AIDS:** Abbreviation for “Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome”.

**Antibodies:** Defences which the body creates in response to germs.

**Antiretroviral therapy (ART):** Therapy applied for the treatment of an HIV infection.

**Confirmation test:** A laboratory test that is automatically performed if the first HIV test was positive, in order to confirm this result.

**CD4 cells:** See T-helper cells. A subgroup of white blood cells which are also called T-helper cells.

**HIV:** Abbreviation for “Human Immunodeficiency Virus”.

**HIV-positive:** To be infected with the HIV virus.

**Immune deficiency:** See defence weakness. The body’s own defence mechanisms are so weak that germs entering the body can no longer be safely eliminated.

**Vaccination:** Administration of a vaccine with the aim of providing protection from a transmittable/infectious disease.

**Lymphocytes:** A subgroup of the white blood cells which play an important part in the defence against bacteria.

**Detection limit:** A laboratory result showing only a small quantity of the virus is in the blood. Being below the detection limit means that less than 50 virus copies per millilitre of blood was found. See viral load.
**Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP):** Short-term preventative HIV therapy in order to prevent HIV after a possible infection.

**Prevention:** Preventative measures in order to prevent undesirable events (e.g. an HIV infection). See safer sex.

**T-helper cells:** See CD4 cells. A subgroup of white blood cells, which are also called T-helper cells.

**Resistances:** Resistance of a life form (e.g. HIV viruses) against damaging effects (e.g. the HIV medication).

**Safer sex:** An English term that comprises a number of measures which can be used to safely prevent the transmission of HIV during sex (e.g. the use of condoms).

**STI:** The abbreviation STI means sexually transmitted infections. These are sexually transmitted infections, which used to be frequently, inaccurately, referred to as “venereal diseases.” Most STIs are curable with medicinal treatment.

**Virus:** In addition to bacteria and parasites, a form of a germ.

**Viral load:** Number of HIV viruses per millilitre of blood. See detection limit.