

INTEGRATED SEXUAL HEALTH SERVICE

HIV

HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is a virus which is currently incurable but can be treated very effectively. If left untreated then HIV can develop into AIDS (acquired Immune deficiency syndrome) which describes a range of infections which can occur after the immune system has been severely weakened. It is estimated there are approximately 100,000 people in England and Wales living with HIV although it is estimated around 25% are unaware of their infection.

How is it caught?

HIV is a relatively weak virus and the greatest risk of transmission is through unprotected penetrative sex, and sharing injecting equipment.

Will I know if I have it?

Most people develop a flu-like illness between 2-6 weeks after infection which lasts for a couple of weeks. After this has disappeared there may be no symptoms for many years. This means that for many people there will be no obvious indication of infection and diagnosis relies on testing. Groups which are recommended for routine testing include;

- Men who have sex with Men.
- Black African heterosexuals.
- People who share needles or other injecting equipment.
- Anyone who is sexually active with a change in sexual contact / partner.

Will it have any long term effects?

Without effective treatment HIV will weaken the immune system to such an extent that someone will be unable to fight off infections which can prove fatal.

<http://sexualhealth.cht.nhs/think-sexual-health>



Sexual Health Calderdale and Huddersfield is part of the Calderdale & Huddersfield NHS Foundation Trust

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How can I best protect myself against HIV?

Condoms still offer very good protection against HIV, as well as having the benefit of protecting against other STI's, and the development of PrEP and PEP can complement this.

PrEP (pre-exposure Prophylaxis) medication reduces the risk of acquiring HIV before coming in to contact with the virus. NHS England are currently trialling this medication in England. PrEP can also be bought privately and the sexual health clinic can advise you how to do this and what testing you may need.

PEP (post exposure prophylaxis) medication can be taken within 72 hours (the sooner the better) if you are worried you may have been exposed to HIV. If a risk happens and we are closed, A&E can start you on the medication if they feel you fit the criteria for PEP

Where can I access testing?

The Sexual Health Service offer HIV testing and this can be accessed by contacting us on 01422 261370 for an appointment or attendance at a Queue and Wait Clinic at Broad Street Clinic. See website for further details.

If you would prefer a non-clinical setting then the Brunswick Centre also offer testing through outreach settings. For further details look on their website (www.thebrunswickcentre.org.uk/about)

Anyone who is pregnant is offered a blood test as part of routine antenatal screening.

What happens if I test positive for HIV?

If you do test positive for HIV then it can be treated very effectively and does not need to negatively impact on your life. A recent study for example has concluded that where a person has an undetectable viral load (ie tests cannot find the virus due to taking HIV medication in the body) then there is no risk of passing this on to anyone else.

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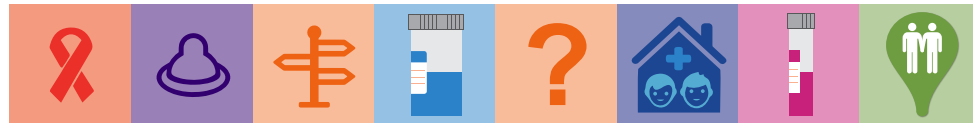
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