



HIV/AIDS AND SOUTH ASIANS

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

- HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is the virus that causes AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome).
- Anyone can become infected with HIV.
- Many people with HIV:
 - Look or feel healthy, and live normal lives;
 - May not know they have HIV because they have never been tested; and
 - Live many years with HIV, if diagnosed and treated.
- HIV-related stigma can be present at every level of society, from individual and family to the healthcare system and community.
- Stigma and discrimination associated with HIV/AIDS can have powerful psychological, social, and health consequences for how people view themselves and live their lives.
- As a group, it is unknown how many South Asians in the U.S. have HIV due to lack of data.
- South Asians are included in the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) population, for whom data is available; as a whole, this group is at risk for HIV.
- The annual percentage increase in new HIV infections for AAPI men and women was higher than any other racial or ethnic group in the U.S.¹
- Over two-thirds of Asians and over half of Pacific Islanders around the world have never been tested for HIV¹ - thus they do not know their status.
- In the U.S., new infections more than doubled for young AAPI men who have sex with other men (MSM) between 2001 and 2006.²
- While there is no cure for HIV, with proper treatment, people with HIV can live long and full lives. That is why it is important to know as soon as possible whether a person has HIV.

- Treatment can help:
 - Keep a person with HIV alive;
 - Prevent or fight illness from HIV; and
 - Reduce the chances that a person with HIV will pass it along to anyone else, including a pregnant woman who may pass it along the virus to her baby.

HOW DOES A PERSON GET HIV?

- HIV lives in the blood, semen, vaginal fluids, and breast milk of an infected person.
- HIV can be passed from an infected person to another person:
 - During vaginal, oral, and/or anal sex;
 - By sharing needles, syringes, or other drug injection equipment;
 - From blood to blood contact;
 - During a blood transfusion, if the blood received was infected with HIV.
- One cannot get HIV by casual contact (such as sitting near someone, shaking hands, giving a hug, using the same toilet seat, water cooler, or telephone); swimming in a pool; giving blood; or being related to someone with HIV.



WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Know your status- Get tested for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.
- Talk with your sexual partner about your sexual histories.
- Use male or female condoms when having vaginal, anal, and/or oral sex.
- If you inject drugs, use new disposable needles and syringes every time. Never share or reuse needles, syringes, or drug equipment.
- Protect your baby- before getting pregnant, have an HIV test done. If you are infected with HIV, you can protect yourself and your baby with medicine.
- Talk to others about the reality that anyone - including South Asians, regardless of religion or class - can get HIV. Never scorn or stigmatize someone who is infected with HIV or AIDS.
- Visit with your health care provider on a regular basis and stay informed about HIV.

RESOURCES

California

Asian Community Mental Health Services

Phone: (510) 451-6729

Website: www.achms.org

Illinois

Asian Human Services

Phone: (773) 728-2235

Website: www.asianhumanservices.org

Counselors Helping (South) Asians/Indians

Phone: (443) 615-1355

Website: www.chaicounselors.org

New York

Coalition for Asian Children and Families

Phone: (212) 809-4675

Website: www.cacf.org

South Asian Health Project

Phone: (800) 530-9821

Website: www.southasianhealth.org

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¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Basic Statistics. Available at: www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/surveillance/basic.htm#aidsrace. Accessed on 16 July 2010.

² Sy FS, Chng CL, Choi ST, Wong FY. Epidemiology of HIV and AIDS among Asian and Pacific Islander communities. New York, NY: Asian and Pacific Islander Coalition on HIV/AIDS; 1998.

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