

# Smittskydd Skåne

## HIV

*Patient information, rights and rules of conduct*

### **What is HIV?**

HIV is a viral infection which affects the immune system. Many people do not notice that they have been infected, while some people fall ill one to four weeks after being infected, suffering from a short-lived fever, sore throat, swollen lymph glands and a rash, known as a primary infection. When the immune system is weakened after a number of years, other symptoms occur and the infected person gradually starts to suffer from various infectious diseases or cancer, which means that the illness known as AIDS has developed. Treatment with drugs reduces the amount of virus in the body and delays/prevents the disease developing into AIDS. HIV infection does not get better. The infected person carries the virus for life and can infect others even when receiving treatment for it.

### **Routes of transmission**

HIV is passed on sexually and in the blood, and mothers infected with HIV can pass the disease on to their babies during pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding. The infection is passed on through sexual intercourse; vaginal, anal and oral. Infection via the blood can take place in the event of a blood transfusion, needlestick injury from an infected person or sharing syringes. There is also a risk of infection if infected blood comes into contact with the mucous membranes of the eye or mouth or with skin wounds. Treatment reduces the level of contagiousness but does not eliminate the risk of infection entirely.

### **When is HIV not contagious?**

HIV cannot be passed on by hugging or kissing, or through tears. Faeces, urine, vomit or catarrh containing no blood are not infectious either. Blood coming into contact with undamaged skin does not present a risk of infection.

### **Rights**

According to the Swedish Communicable Diseases Act (Smittskyddslagen), testing for, visits for and treatment of HIV is free to patients.

You are also entitled to the psychosocial support you may need in order to deal with the disease. Your doctor should advise you on how to avoid putting others at risk of infection.

### **Professional activities**

Infection with HIV will not normally result in restrictions to your professional activities or studies. In rare cases, you may be affected by restrictions in respect of your work, practice or participation in other activities if there is a risk of infection.

### **Pregnancy and breastfeeding**

If you are infected with HIV, regardless of whether you are male or female, measures are available to help you and your partner to fall pregnant with minimal risk of infection to your child and your uninfected partner. Women infected with HIV must not breastfeed.

### **Children with HIV**

Children who are infected with HIV have the same entitlement to childcare and schooling as other children, but they may have special needs which have to be taken into account. The doctor providing treatment must notify a parent or other carer of the guidelines applicable to preschool/school children with HIV. Provision of information to preschool/school staff about the HIV infection of a child requires the permission of a parent/carer. The parent/carer and child will receive infection protection information via the doctor providing treatment, and this information will gradually be adapted as the child gets older.

### **Condoms for oral, vaginal or anal sex**

Condoms provide good protection against HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases and must always be worn throughout the entire sex session/period of intimate contact. It is reasonable to assume that female condoms will also work, but this method has not been evaluated scientifically.

### **Preventive drug therapy**

If a person in your environment may have been infected due to sexual contact where condoms have not provided protection, to contact with your blood or in some other manner, it is possible to give preventive drug therapy known as Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP). This must begin as quickly as possible. Contact the doctor providing treatment or an infection clinic/24-hour service as soon as possible.

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## Contact tracing

It is possible to have HIV and show no symptoms, so it is very important to find the people who are infected. You are obliged to participate in contact tracing in order to reduce the risk of injury and to prevent the infection spreading to other people. With contact tracing, you have to name the people who may have infected you – or whom you may have infected – to a responsible contact tracing officer. These may be people with whom you have had sex or other sexual contact, people with whom you have shared syringes, and in some cases family members. The aim is to find everyone who may be infected. Full confidentiality is applicable in respect of contact tracing. Your identity will not be released to the people contacted. Contact tracing must be repeated if you have had new contacts who are at risk of infection.

## Hygiene advice which you should follow so as not to infect anyone else

- Take care to bandage even small wounds.
- Anyone helping you with dressing wounds must wear plastic gloves.
- Pack bloodstained equipment carefully before discarding it.
- Clothing stained with blood must be machine-washed.
- Specks of blood on the floor, for example, must be cleaned up using single-use materials which are then discarded. Then wash thoroughly with water and detergent.
- If anyone gets your blood in a wound, the eyes, nose or mouth, flush immediately with water. Notify the person that your blood is infectious and that they must get in touch with the nearest infection clinic/24-hour service as soon as possible.

## Rules of conduct which the doctor treating you will give you so that you do not infect anyone else

- You must attend the repeat visits and tests which your doctor considers necessary.
- You must notify your sexual partner that you are infected with HIV before any form of sexual contact which presents a significant risk (see below) of transmission of HIV ("duty to inform"). There is a risk of transmitting HIV during oral, vaginal and anal sex.
- Condoms must be worn throughout the entire session in the event of sex where the penis is inserted in the vagina, the rectum or the mouth.
- If you inject drugs, you must have your own syringes and needles and not let other people use them. You must not share mixing cups or other accessories. The items you use for injecting drugs must be stored so that they do not place others at risk of infection.
- You must not donate blood, sperm, eggs, organs or tissue for transplantation.
- When you require dental or medical care, you must provide notification indicating that your blood is infectious.
- If you want a tattoo, to have your ears pierced or have any other treatment involving the use of sharp tools and where bleeding may occur, e.g. body piercing, you must provide notification indicating that your blood is infectious before the action takes place.
- Do not share toilet items such as razors or toothbrushes with other people.
- You may be affected by restrictions in respect of your work or participation in other activities where there is a risk of infection.

HIV is what is known as a public health hazard according to the Swedish Communicable Diseases Act. Therefore, you are obliged to protect other people from the risk of infection by following the rules of conduct given to you by your doctor.

The rule of contact above relating to the obligation to provide information uses the term "significant risk", which is also present in the Swedish Communicable Diseases Act. This refers to an actual risk of infection which is not overly insignificant. If you have stabilised treatment and there are no other circumstances which increase the risk of infection, the doctor treating you may decide that the risk of infection is so low that it is no longer significant. The rule of conduct relating to the obligation to provide information may then be reassessed by the doctor treating you. You may also request reassessment of the rules of conduct assigned to you by the County Medical Officer in your county. You must follow the rules assigned to you before any such assessment is complete.

Irrespective of the rules of conduct assigned to you, you must always notify the affected person if a situation has arisen or may potentially arise where there is a significant risk of infection. Discuss these circumstances with your doctor.