
JAIL BULLETIN

NUMBER 43

July, 1988

The Jail Bulletin is a monthly feature of the Crime Commission Update. The Bulletin may be used as a supplement to your jail in-service training program if officers study the material and complete the attached "open book" quiz. The Bulletin and quiz may be reproduced for use by your staff. We welcome any jail training materials you would like to contribute to the Bulletin.

Questions and Answers About AIDS

1. What is AIDS?

Acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) is a disease complex characterized by a collapse of the body's natural immunity against disease. Because of this failure of the immune system, patients with AIDS are vulnerable to one or more unusual infections or cancers that usually do not pose a threat to anyone whose immune system is working normally.

2. What causes AIDS?

Investigators have discovered a virus that is linked with AIDS. An international committee of scientists recently designated the virus as human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). It previously had been called human T-lymphotropic virus, type III (HTLV-III), lymphadenopathy associated virus (LAV), or AIDS-related virus (ARV). Infection with this virus does not always lead to AIDS, and researchers are investigating whether other co-factors may be necessary to trigger the disease. Preliminary studies show that most HIV infected persons remain in good health; others may develop illness varying in severity from mild to extremely serious.

AIDS Risk Groups

3. Who is at risk for AIDS?

Approximately 95 percent of AIDS cases in the U.S. have occurred among the following groups of people:

73% - homosexual or bisexual men;

17% - heterosexual IV drug users;

3% - persons with hemophilia or others who received transfusions of infected blood or blood products prior to mid-1985 when testing of blood supplies and other precautions were initiated to reduce this risk;

2% - heterosexual contacts of persons with AIDS or at risk for AIDS;

1% - children who apparently acquired AIDS prior to or during birth from infected mothers.

Some 5% of AIDS cases cannot be assigned to these risk groups, but researchers believe that transmission occurred in similar ways. Some patients die before complete histories can be taken; others refuse to be interviewed.

4. Is AIDS starting to spread outside of the known risk groups?

The percentage of AIDS cases that can't be definitively assigned to one of the known risk groups has remained constant, at about 5 percent, during the last six years. Some researchers are projecting that more cases will be linked with heterosexual contact in the future.

5. Why have Haitians been removed from the AIDS risk groups?

Haitians were removed as a distinct risk group for AIDS when it became apparent that cases among Haitians were linked with the same risk behaviors as other cases -- sexual contact, sharing needles, and transfusion of contaminated blood.

AIDS Transmission

6. How contagious is AIDS?

Unlike most transmissible diseases -- colds, flu, measles, etc. -- AIDS is not transmitted through sneezing, coughing, eating or drinking from common utensils, or merely being around an infected person. After six years of experience it is evident that casual contact with AIDS patients does not place others at risk. No cases have been found where AIDS has been transmitted through casual (non-sexual) contact to a household member, relative, co-worker or friend.

7. How is AIDS transmitted?

AIDS is not an easily transmissible disease. All evidence indicates that AIDS is spread through sexual contact, needle sharing or less commonly through transfusions of blood or blood components before blood supply protections were initiated. Direct blood-to-blood or semen-to-blood contact appears necessary to transmit the virus associated with AIDS. There is no evidence that AIDS can be transmitted through air, water, food or casual, body contact.

8. Why are homosexual and bisexual males at high risk for AIDS?

Cases of AIDS among homosexual and bisexual males are associated with sexual contact, specifically anal intercourse and other sexual practices which may result in semen-to-blood or blood-to-blood contact. Anyone who engages in such practices is at increased risk for AIDS, whether they are homosexual or heterosexual.

9. Why are IV drug abusers at increased risk for AIDS?

IV drug abusers often share needles for drug injection which can result in small amounts of blood from an infected person being injected directly into the bloodstream of the next user.

10. Why are hemophiliacs at increased risk for AIDS?

Hemophiliacs receive frequent transfusions of blood concentrates which must be collected from several hundred to thousands of donors. Cases of AIDS among hemophiliacs have been linked with receipt of blood products from HIV infected donors. Efforts are underway to produce synthetic clotting concentrates which would eliminate the risk of AIDS, hepatitis B and other diseases that can be transmitted through blood products. In the meantime, heat treatment of blood components has effectively inactivated such viral agents.

11. Is AIDS passed by kissing?

HIV virus has been found in the saliva of some AIDS patients, but there is not a single case of AIDS that is known or suspected of having been transmitted by kissing. If AIDS were transmitted by kissing, many family members of persons with AIDS would be expected to have developed the condition. This has not occurred.

12. Why is anal intercourse linked with the transmission of AIDS?

The lining of the rectum is thinner and more easily torn than the thicker, protective lining of the vagina. Anal intercourse can therefore result in direct semen-to-blood exchange.

13. Can AIDS be transmitted through oral/genital sex?

It has not yet been established whether oral/genital sex transmits the disease.

14. Can AIDS be transmitted through vaginal intercourse?

AIDS has been transmitted from infected males to females. It is not known if these cases involved only vaginal intercourse or if anal intercourse was also practiced.

15. How do women contract AIDS?

The majority of women who develop AIDS have a history of IV drug abuse, and presumably contracted the virus through sharing of needles. About 20 percent of women with AIDS have as their only risk factor sexual contact with a man who has AIDS or is positive for HIV.

16. Can infected women transmit AIDS to men through sexual contact?

There are a handful of AIDS cases reported to have been transmitted from women to men. These cases are still under investigation to identify the potential transmission route or to determine if other risk factors may be involved. Some experts believe that female-to-male transmission of AIDS through sexual contact is unlikely, or difficult.

17. Does promiscuous sexual contact increase the risk of AIDS?

Promiscuous sexual contact increases the risk of AIDS and of sexually transmitted diseases, including syphilis, gonorrhea and herpes. Public health officials are advising all men and women to know the sexual history and health status of sexual partners and to avoid anonymous, promiscuous sexual contact.

18. Can use of a condom during sex reduce the risk of AIDS?

Use of a condom during sex probably reduces the risk of AIDS since it minimizes direct contact with semen, a body fluid known to carry the HIV virus in infected persons. Since condoms are not failsafe, people should not rely on condoms as their only defense against AIDS. All sexually active people are advised to refrain from sexual contact with persons whose history and health status are unknown.

19. Can prostitutes spread AIDS?

There are currently no proven cases in the U.S. of AIDS transmission from a female prostitute to a male. Prostitutes are likely carriers of HIV virus since they are often IV drug abusers. Most prostitutes require use of condoms, but anyone who engages in sex with an anonymous partner is increasing the risk of contracting AIDS and sexually transmissible diseases.

20. How can people reduce their risk of getting AIDS through sexual contact?

All sexually-active people -- males and females, homosexuals and heterosexuals -- are advised to limit the number of sexual partners and to avoid sexual contact with anyone whose past history and health status is unknown. Avoiding anal intercourse or other sexual practices which can result in blood-to-blood or semen-to-blood contact, and use of condoms should also help to decrease the risk.

21. What is the risk of getting AIDS from a blood transfusion?

The risk of contracting AIDS through a blood transfusion has been significantly reduced through screening of all blood donations since mid-1985 for antibodies to HIV and removal of blood found antibody positive from the transfusion pool. The risk of contracting AIDS through a blood transfusion was only 1 in 1,000,000 prior to initiation of blood screening; the risk is now significantly lower.

22. Is there a danger of contracting AIDS from donating blood?

No. Blood banks and other blood collection centers use sterile equipment and disposable needles. The need for blood is always acute, and people who are not at increased risk for AIDS are urged to continue to donate blood as they have in the past.

23. Can you get AIDS by drinking from the same glass or eating from the same dishes as a person with AIDS?

Six years of experience indicates that AIDS is not transmitted in households where people may drink or eat from common dishes or utensils. The virus associated with AIDS does not survive well outside of the body and would be killed by normal washing of dishes and other eating utensils.

24. Can you get AIDS from public toilets, drinking fountains, telephones or public transportation?

AIDS is not transmitted through the air, food or water, or by touching any object handled, touched or breathed on by an AIDS patient. The virus associated with AIDS does not survive well outside of the human body.

25. Can you get AIDS from eating in a restaurant where someone with AIDS is working as a cook or waiter?

Eating in restaurants does not increase the risk for AIDS. There are no cases of AIDS that have been transmitted through food preparation or food handling.

26. Can you get AIDS by touching someone who has it?

After six years of experience there is no indication that AIDS is spread through any form of casual contact, including handshakes, bumping together in crowds, contact sports, even casual kissing.

27. Can AIDS be spread by swimming pools?

There are no cases of AIDS suspected of having been transmitted through swimming pools. The virus associated with AIDS would be killed by the chlorine used to disinfect swimming pools.

28. Can you get AIDS from trying on clothes in a department store?

AIDS is not transmitted through the air or by touching any object used or touched by a person with AIDS.

29. Can you get AIDS from handling money?

Years of experience indicates that AIDS is not transmitted through objects touched or handled by an AIDS patient.

30. Can you get AIDS from using someone's razor or toothbrush?

Not likely, since it appears to take direct infusion of infected blood into your bloodstream to transmit the disease. It would, however, be prudent to avoid sharing of instruments where blood-to-blood contact could occur.

31. Can you get AIDS from dental instruments?

There are no cases of AIDS that have been linked with dental instruments, and the sterilization process would kill the HIV virus. Dentists are being advised to take special precautions to guard against cuts which could result in direct blood-to-blood exchange with a patient and potentially increase the risk of AIDS, Hepatitis B and other blood transmissible diseases.

32. Can you get AIDS by being in the same house with an AIDS patient?

No. Experts point out that no household member of any AIDS patient other than a sexual partner or an infant born to an infected mother has developed the disease.

33. Can you get AIDS from a gay friend or co-worker?

No. AIDS is not transmitted through casual contact. After six years of experience no cases of AIDS have developed among casual friends or co-workers

of AIDS patients. There is no evidence that being around someone with AIDS, even for an extended period of time, puts you at risk for AIDS.

34. What is the risk of living in a neighborhood that has a hospital or home for AIDS patients?

None, since AIDS is not transmitted through the air or through casual contact.

35. Can mosquitos transmit AIDS?

There is no evidence that mosquitos, other insects or rodents play any role in the transmission of AIDS.

36. Are people at increased risk for AIDS because they live in certain geographic areas (such as San Francisco or New York City)?

People are only at risk for AIDS if they engage in high risk activities -- sexual contact involving blood-to-blood or semen-to-blood exchange, or sharing needles.

37. Are health care workers or other occupational groups at special risk for AIDS?

Safety protocols have been developed for health care workers and other occupational groups that may come into contact with body fluids of AIDS patients in their work. The federal Centers for Disease Control is following some 1,000 health care workers who have experienced blood-to-blood or blood-to-mucous membrane exposure to the body fluids of AIDS patients; many of these workers have had needle-stick injuries while treating AIDS patients. Only two health care workers (one in the U.S. and one in England) have reportedly developed antibodies to the AIDS-linked virus after experiencing deep punctures with needles containing the blood of AIDS patients. These cases demonstrate the need for health care workers to strictly follow safety guidelines when handling needles or other sharp instruments used for AIDS patients.

Note: The above article is taken from the booklet 100 Questions And Answers About AIDS, published by the National Sheriffs' Association under a National Institute of Corrections grant. The remainder of the material will be included in future issues of the Jail Bulletin.

QUIZ

Nebraska Jail Standards require that jail staff receive eighteen (18) hours of in-service training each year. The Jail Bulletin may be used to supplement in-service training if an officer studies the Bulletin, completes the quiz, and this process is documented by the jail administrator for review during annual jail inspection.

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 ABOUT AIDS

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NUMBER: 43

DATE _____

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- Hemophiliacs
- Homosexual or bisexual men
- Female prostitutes

2. How do most women contract AIDS?

3. Can mosquitos transmit AIDS?

- Only mosquitos in tropical climates
- There is no known evidence of this

4. What advice does the article give for sharing a razor?

5. The risk of getting AIDS from a blood transfusion is

- Significantly lower than one in a million
- About one in 100,000
- Impossible

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ANSWER SHEET SHOULD BE RETAINED BY JAIL ADMINISTRATOR.

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