



HIV PREVENTION

They say that the best treatment for any illness is preventing it in the first place, and that is certainly true of HIV. Huge amounts of resources are available for HIV prevention, including educational materials, condoms, trainings, and others. Ultimately, the best way to prevent HIV is to train oneself and others on the nature of the disease, its risk factors, and how to prevent infection.

This section includes information about such resources, including suggested language to use in the production of materials, how to order materials that have already been produced or obtained at the state level, and other helpful tips and advice.

PREVENTION LANGUAGE

As a part of the information-gathering for the production of this guide, numerous prevention and other educational materials regarding HIV and STDs were collected from state partners. These materials are cached at the Great Plains Tribal Chairmen's Health Board, and many can be ordered from the state for dissemination at the Tribal level (see below). However, the production of Tribal- or Native-specific materials is often extremely helpful in the effort to promote prevention at the Tribal level. Therefore, the authors of this guide reviewed the collected materials and developed some language that Tribes may consider using in educational materials that they produce.

(Note: materials are often most helpful if they include for readers, in addition to that regarding prevention, information about testing and treatment options in their area and contact information for those whom they can call for questions. The former is available in other sections of this guide, and can be pulled from there for the purpose of these materials if need be.)

SAMPLE LANGUAGE

HIV stands for human immunodeficiency virus; it is this virus that causes acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). Oftentimes, people do not want to believe that HIV can happen to them or their family. However, it may only take one bad decision or mistake to become infected.

The transmission of HIV occurs through the sharing of infected body fluids, including blood, semen, vaginal fluid, and breast milk. HIV *cannot* be transmitted through shaking hands, hugging, or other basic physical contact. Further, the amount of virus within body fluids must be high for transmission to take place, so it is highly unlikely that transmission could occur by, for example, sharing drinks or utensils. However, activities like sexual contact, intravenous drug use, and the sharing of needles present significant risks.

There is no vaccine or cure for HIV, but it can be prevented by taking some basic precautions:

- I. DO NOT engage in unprotected sex (including oral, vaginal, or anal intercourse)
 - The best way to protect yourself from HIV is to abstain from sexual intercourse of any kind
 - Oral ulcers, bleeding gums, genital sores, and other cofactors involved with STD infection increase the risk of HIV transmission
 - If you do engage in sexual activity:
 - Always use latex or polyurethane condoms or dental dams
 - Do not use damaged, expired, or used condoms
 - Always use water-based lubricants (oil and petroleum make latex condoms less effective)



- Limit your number of sexual partners and preferably remain in a mutually-exclusive relationship
- Abstain from engaging in sexual activity while drunk or high – alcohol and drug use inhibit good choices, leading to risky behavior and a higher likelihood of infection

2. DO NOT share needles or injection equipment

- Needles used for drugs or medications (including steroids, vitamins, insulin, hormones, and others), tattoos, and body piercing can transmit HIV
- Always use new, sterile needles and equipment (including cotton, rinse water, cookers, and other equipment)
- See a qualified professional for tattoos or body piercings
- Look into needle exchange programs that may be available in your area

3. Know your HIV status – GET TESTED

- If you are sexually active, consider getting yearly tests for STDs, including HIV
 - Not all STDs, including HIV, have obvious symptoms, or symptoms may appear several months to several years after contact (as with HIV)
 - HIV can infect any sexually active person, no matter their age
- Tests (whether conventional or rapid testing) are often free and always confidential
- Pregnant women should get tested to prevent spreading HIV to their baby in the womb, during birth, or while breast feeding
 - Untreated HIV-positive pregnant women have a 15-25% chance of passing HIV to their unborn child, but proper prenatal care can reduce this likelihood to 1-2%
- Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is recommended for high risk groups and is 70-90% effective if taken every day; however, it costs upwards \$12,000 per year and requires motivation on the part of the patient and community³²

4. COMMUNICATE with your sexual partner(s)

- Discuss past sexual partners and intravenous drug use, safe sexual practices, and getting tested for STDs/HIV
- Protect yourself, even if your partner will not
- If your partner has or is newly diagnosed with an STD, get treatment with them
- Refrain from sexual activity with those you suspect may have HIV or those who have visible symptoms of STDs such as rashes, sores, redness, and/or discharge near the sexual organs, rectum, or mouth