

## WE TALK ABOUT HIV AND AIDS

Many people find it difficult to talk about HIV and AIDS because the topic is often taboo and can make people feel anxious. We are going to talk about it anyway, in order to provide you with information. It may then be easier for you to talk about protection against HIV, for example with your partner, family or physician.

This flyer provides the most important information about how the virus is transmitted, how you can protect yourself, the HIV test, and about living with HIV in Austria.

Do you have more questions? We are happy to advise you!

Phone: 05574/46 5 26

# HILFE

AIDS HILFE

## AIDS-Hilfe Vorarlberg

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Opening hours testing and counseling  
Tue, Thu: 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.  
Wed, Fri: 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

WE TALK ABOUT IT  
INFORMATION ABOUT HIV AND AIDS

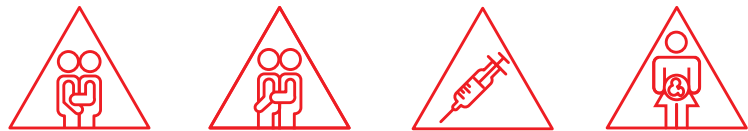
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## WHAT IS HIV AND WHAT IS AIDS?

HIV is a virus. It weakens the immune system, which is essential for the body to fight all kinds of diseases. After several years of infection (when left untreated) the immune system can't work properly anymore and the body won't have protection against other diseases or infections. This situation is called AIDS.

If the HIV-infection remains untreated, it is also more probable to pass the virus to others. This can happen through:

- vaginal or anal intercourse without a condom
- oral sex, if semen or menstrual blood get into the mouth
- drug use, if syringes and needles are shared
- mother-to-child transmission, if no measures are taken.



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## HOW CAN YOU PROTECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS?

- Use condoms for vaginal and anal intercourse. They provide protection from HIV and reduce the risk of contracting other sexually transmitted infections.
- Take care not to get blood or semen into the mouth.
- When injecting drugs, only use your own injecting equipment, and do not pass used syringes on to others.
- Pregnant women with HIV or HIV positive women with the wish to have children can prevent transmitting the virus to their baby by seeking for counseling and care from HIV specialists before and during pregnancy and by taking prescribed medication and avoid breastfeeding.

## NO RISK OF INFECTION FROM EVERYDAY LIFE

HIV is not easily transmitted, so there is no risk of infection in everyday life. You can quite happily live and work with other people, shake hands with them, hug them and kiss them, use the same toilets, baths and saunas, eat from the same plate, drink from the same glass, and use the same cutlery. HIV is not transmitted through the air, through saliva, tears, sweat, urine, faeces or via insect bites or animals.



## HOW CAN YOU RECOGNIZE AN HIV-INFECTION?

Between the point of time of infection and the onset of AIDS many years can pass by. Without an HIV test the infection remains undetected as you cannot notice that someone is HIV positive by looking at the person. Therefore it is important to get tested! The easiest way is to go to AIDS-Hilfe Vorarlberg. Here you can get tested anonymously, without providing your name and the test is free of charge. During a counseling at AIDS-Hilfe Vorarlberg you can also put your personal questions. For the test a small amount of blood will be taken and sent to a laboratory. After a few days you can collect your result. You can do the test at least 2 weeks after a risk. But it takes three months after the risk situation until the HIV test will provide a reliable result!

## LIVING WITH HIV IN AUSTRIA

If someone is tested HIV positive, it does not necessarily mean that he or she will develop AIDS. In fact: The earlier an HIV infection is diagnosed the better it can be treated with a medical therapy and AIDS can be prevented. Talk to your HIV specialist! If you don't have health insurance AIDS-Hilfe Vorarlberg can support you on further steps. By the way: An HIV infection does not affect the residency status: it does not mean that you have to leave Austria. And nowadays, it is possible for HIV positive people to work in almost all occupations.