

Who gets HIV/AIDS

Every one can become infected with HIV/AIDS if they do not practice prevention: old people, young people, virgins, babies, everybody. *HIV/AIDS is like the rain that does not recognize anyone as a friend: it drenches all equally. HIV does not discriminate.* Many people fear revealing that they have AIDS because they know that there are people out there who would discriminate against them and stigmatize them. This is wrong. We all need to learn how to live with people who have AIDS. And remember: *the log in the woodpile does not laugh at the one in the fire.* It could be you tomorrow.



Origin of AIDS

The story of the origin of AIDS has changed quite often over the past few decades: from a virus that

was created in a lab to a homosexual/gay disease to Africa. This has angered many Africans so much that they chose to ignore it and argue about its origin. *People in a burning house must not stop to argue.* The origin of AIDS matters little now as we all, Africans and non-Africans alike, are vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. **It is not who you are, but what you do that puts you at risk.**

What is important to note in this brochure is that, there has been a great increase in HIV/AIDS cases among African communities living in Minnesota, and 53% of HIV/AIDS cases among Africans in Minnesota are men and 47% are women - www.health.state.mn.us

*Text: Nyango Ndinge Nembang
Illustrations: Genevieve Roudane, 2003
Funding: New American Collaborative, Wilder Foundation and Otto Bremer Foundation*

Facts in Africa

2.3 million people are living with HIV/AIDS in Africa. Everyday, 6000 die from AIDS. In the year 2000, there were 16 million African AIDS orphans, there will be 28 million in 2010: www.cnn.com/2000/HEALTH/AIDS/07/13/aids.orphans/index.html

Senegal and Uganda have the most success in containing the spread of AIDS. Uganda, which was formerly

the country with the highest incidence of AIDS is now the world success story: in 1993, 1.5 million Ugandans were affected by AIDS, 800,000 of them have died leaving 1.7 million orphans. But Ugandans have learned and are practicing prevention especially using condoms and reducing the number of sexual partners.

Drums are never beaten without reason.

When a lion comes into your village, you must raise the alarm loudly. This is what we did in Uganda; we took it seriously and we achieved good results. AIDS can be prevented as it is transmitted through a few known ways. If we raise awareness sufficiently, it will stop.
— Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni



The Rwandan Government agrees that the "sexual behavior of men currently contributes substantially to the spread of HIV/AIDS in Rwanda and around the world.

Engaging men as partners in fighting HIV/AIDS is one of the surest ways to change the course of the epidemic, according to UNAIDS. That is why UNAIDS has chosen **'Men Make a Difference'** as the theme of this year's global campaign.

On a world-wide scale, women between the ages of 15 and 24 account for half of new HIV infections... It is estimated that 55% of all HIV positive adults in Sub-Saharan Africa are women. Teenage girls are infected at a rate 5 times greater than their male counterparts.

The reason for these numbers are seen in the unequal relationships between women and men, especially when it comes to sexuality. Violence against and abuse of women and girls is the most eye-catching example. Rape is widespread, and in South Africa, elder AIDS infected men are reported to mass rape younger, non-infected women, believing this may cure them from the disease. Violence against women can also take less overt forms. Young girls often have sexual relationships with 'sugar daddies' who coerce them to have sex in exchange for gifts and favors. Such unequal relationships also have great consequences for women, in terms of their risk of infection.

Cultural & behavioral practices that contribute to the AIDS pandemic include: Male circumcision, female genital mutilation, Widow inheritance, death-cleansing, cosmetic tattooing or administration of charms, multiplicity of sex partners, pervasive polygamy, and little girls given to marriage to old men with other wives.
Source: afrol news – www.afrol.com

Prevention

He who has shoes does not fear thorns.



There are only two major ways to prevent HIV/AIDS – **don't have sex at all or use a latex condom every time you have sex.** Using a latex condom every time you have sex is the biggest chance of prevention that you have. Remember: *The wind does not break a tree that bends.*

Whether you like condoms or not is not the issue. *When the drumbeat changes, the dancers must follow its rhythm.* The dance of sex has changed, use condoms. *He who has shoes does not fear thorns.* Some people complain that it disturbs them to put on condoms. *There is no bad patience. Making preparations does not spoil the trip.* As the Swahili say: *Haraka haraka haina baraka:* Hurry hurry has no blessings. Take the time and use condoms every time. Keep a clear head and save your life: Alcohol and drugs impair judgment. Keeping a clear head improves your chances of practicing prevention.



Myths

One of the most deadly myths, which is rampant in some parts of Africa now and maybe some Africans here in Minnesota also believe it, is that having sex with a virgin cures AIDS. THIS IS A LIE. THERE IS NO CURE FOR AIDS. This idea so enraged former President of Zambia, Kenneth Kaunda, that he exclaimed: "You rape a child believing this will heal you. What madness is this?" Having sex with a virgin or a child just creates another AIDS victim. *Old and new millet seeds end up in the same mill.* Actually, it may be worse for the rapist if that virgin or child already has AIDS: further complications will arise making the disease worse for him. Raping someone because you believe it will cure AIDS or deliberately infecting others because, as some have

said before, "I did not buy it in the market", is murder. 24 States in the US will persecute anyone who knowingly infects others with HIV/AIDS. Besides the law, it is a double edged sword that will hurt you too. As our people say: *a person who urinates in a stream should be warned because any of his or her relatives may drink from that stream in future.* It may be your sister, your brother, your child, AIDS goes around: It will come back to your house.

Remember!

- No HIV/AIDS patient is reported to immigration.
- There are now oral tests available.
- You can also be tested anonymously. All tests are confidential.
- HIV/AIDS patients can receive treatment even if they do not have health insurance.
- Any AIDS patient, even those who are here illegally, can receive treatment.
- The earlier you are diagnosed with HIV, the sooner you can start receiving treatment and live longer.
- Only latex condoms are the best kind for preventing AIDS.

This AIDS business is dangerous. Pretending it does not exist will not help us: *Sa kogolen be dago* as the Bambara say – the hidden snake grows big – *le serpent qui est caché s'agrandisse. The elephant grows and becomes an adult whether people like it or not.* We know this is a discussion many of us do not like. But we need to talk about it and practice prevention. *No one drinks hot pepper soup in a hurry:* take your time, think about this and read this brochure again. Then start telling others, start practicing prevention. Do it for yourself, do it for your children, do it for your family, do it for your tribe, do it for your clan. 6000 Africans die everyday from AIDS. If we all allow ourselves to die, who will take care of the children?

MAWA, Minnesota African Women's Association
2507 Fremont Avenue North, Suite 215
Minneapolis, MN 55411
612-529-9267, x 3302 Fax: 612-529-4743
Mawa0302@yahoo.com • www.mawanet.org



Mawa

Minnesota African Women's Association



*When a lion comes into your village,
you must raise the alarm loudly.*

Culturally Appropriate HIV/AIDS Education for Africans in Minnesota

if nothing touches the palm leaves, they do not rustle. That is why we, Africans, who do not talk about sex and HIV/AIDS, now must talk about it. AIDS is killing Africans in large numbers. About six thousand (6000) Africans die everyday from AIDS. Here in Minnesota, 335 Africans are living with AIDS; 65 new cases were diagnosed in 2002 and six African countries rank as the most affected here in Minnesota. We, Africans, have to start taking HIV/AIDS seriously. *A fly that has no one to advise it, follows the corpse into the grave.* African presidents have declared war on AIDS: it is that serious. *When a vine entwines your roof, it is time to cut it down.* The vine has entwined our roof: we must cut it down.

What is HIV and AIDS?

HIV is the short form for *Human Immunodeficiency virus*. This is the virus that causes AIDS. AIDS stands for *Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome* which means that when the HIV virus attacks you, your immune system that fights disease becomes damaged and can no longer fight off disease or infection. These diseases and infections from which you could recover before can now kill you no matter how strong or young you were: *you become like an old lion that even flies can attack.*

How does one get HIV/AIDS?

You get HIV by having sex or blood-to-blood contact with an infected person. You cannot know who is an infected person unless they have been tested and only if they tell you. People who have HIV might not know that they have it because they look healthy and do not feel sick. Even though they feel and look healthy, they can still infect others for years before they start feeling sick. You will only know that you have HIV/AIDS when you are tested for it or when the symptoms begin to appear. Many of the symptoms look like those of common illnesses like fever

and diarrhea. A person with HIV/AIDS can still infect you even if they are taking medications. **ONLY A DOCTOR CAN TELL YOU IF YOU HAVE AIDS.**

There is **NO VACCINE** for HIV/AIDS. There is **NO CURE** for AIDS. The medicines that are given to people with AIDS help them to live longer and healthier lives but do not cure them. **The only weapon against HIV/AIDS is prevention.**

How is HIV spread?

The are 3 common ways by which HIV is spread:

- By having sex with someone who has HIV/AIDS, either through the vagina, anus or oral sex.
- By using a hypodermic needle (injection) that some one who has HIV/AIDS has used.
- From a mother with HIV/AIDS to her baby during pregnancy or childbirth and through breastfeeding.

Actually, HIV is found in varying concentrations or amounts in blood, semen, vaginal fluid, breast milk, saliva, and tears - see: www.cdc.gov/hiv/pubs/facts/transmission.htm for more details. If you are ill and need a blood transfusion in the United States, do not be afraid: all donated blood is tested for HIV and people who have HIV/AIDS are not allowed to give blood in the United States.