A circular inset image showing a microscopic view of numerous spherical HIV particles, appearing as small, textured spheres. The word "AIDS" is superimposed in large, bold, red letters with a black outline across the center of this image.

**AIDS**

**QUESTIONS  
AND ANSWERS**

MINISTRY OF HEALTH MALAYSIA

# Preface

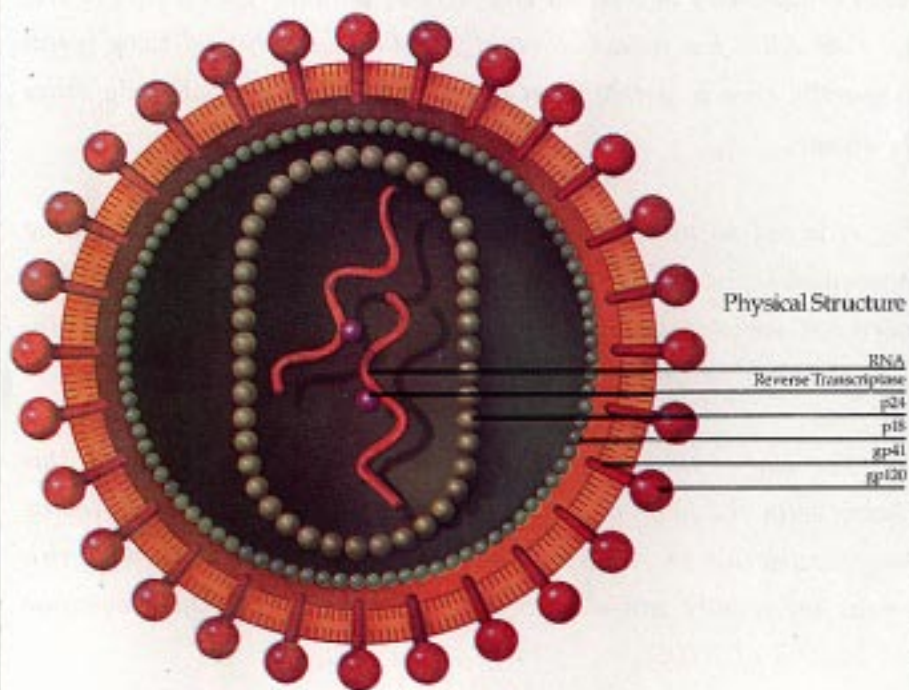
Since it was first reported in 1981, **AIDS** has caused world-wide anxiety, especially in western and African nations. This is due to the fact that **AIDS** has spread so rapidly and extensively and there is still no specific cure as yet. Most of the **AIDS** patients ultimately die from the disease.

It is sad to note that **AIDS** patients not only have to face the consequences of infection with **AIDS** virus but also have to face enormous social pressures and discrimination resulting from a misunderstanding of the **AIDS** disease.

The aim of this booklet is to educate the general public on this disease, with the hope of allaying their fear of this disease, improving their perspective of **AIDS** patients and provide guidance to high risk groups specifically and also to the general public on the prevention and control of **AIDS**.

Fight AIDS by knowing the facts

# The Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)



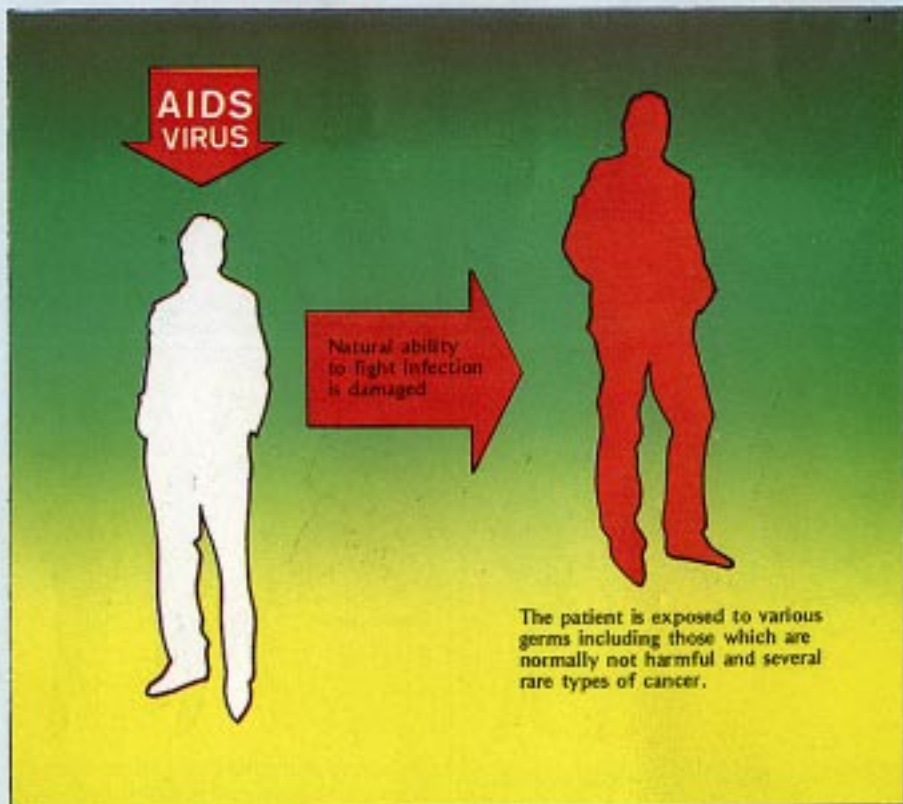


## 1. WHAT IS AIDS?

**AIDS** or “Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome” is a disease caused by a virus (called Human Immunodeficiency Virus – HIV or **AIDS** virus) which causes a breakdown in the body’s immune system or natural ability to fight diseases.

With this breakdown in the body’s immune system, a person suffering from **AIDS** is vulnerable to:–

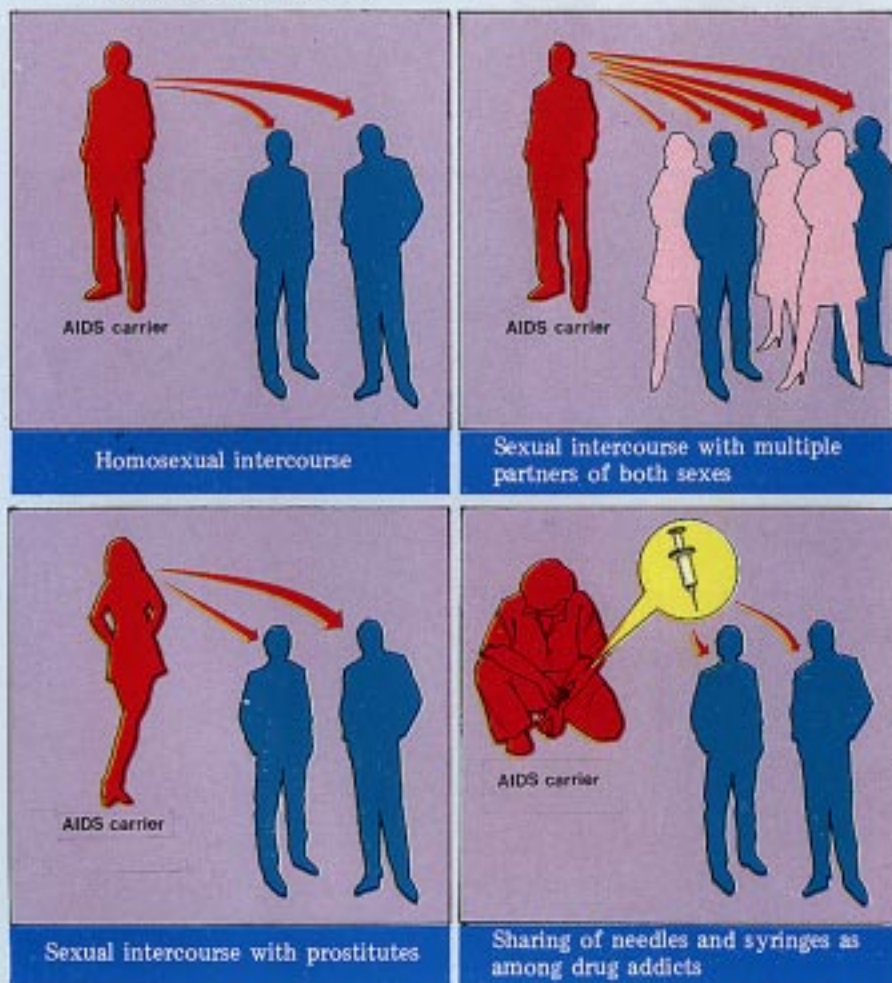
- *Various germs, including those which normally do not cause disease in human beings.*
- *Several rare types of cancer*



## 2. HOW IS AIDS SPREAD?

**AIDS** is mainly spread through blood, semen and vaginal secretions of persons who have been infected with the **AIDS** virus. **AIDS** can also be spread by an infected mother to her baby.

Based on this fact, the activities which can expose you to **AIDS** infection are as follows:—



### 3. CAN YOU GET AIDS BY DONATING BLOOD?

No. This is not possible as all the materials used for collecting blood are sterile and are used only once. In fact, persons who are not at risk for AIDS are encouraged to donate blood.



### 4. CAN YOU GET AIDS THROUGH BLOOD TRANSFUSION?



This is **not likely** to happen at present as all donated blood in Malaysia have been screened for the presence of AIDS antibodies. AIDS antibodies are substances produced by the body of an infected person in response to infection by the AIDS virus.



5. CAN AIDS BE SPREAD BY JUST TOUCHING AN AIDS PATIENT?

No. AIDS cannot be spread by touching and other forms of casual contact such as:



▲ Holding hands



▲ Bodily contact in crowded public places



▲ Shaking hands



▲ Working together



▲ Playing games



▲ Light kissing

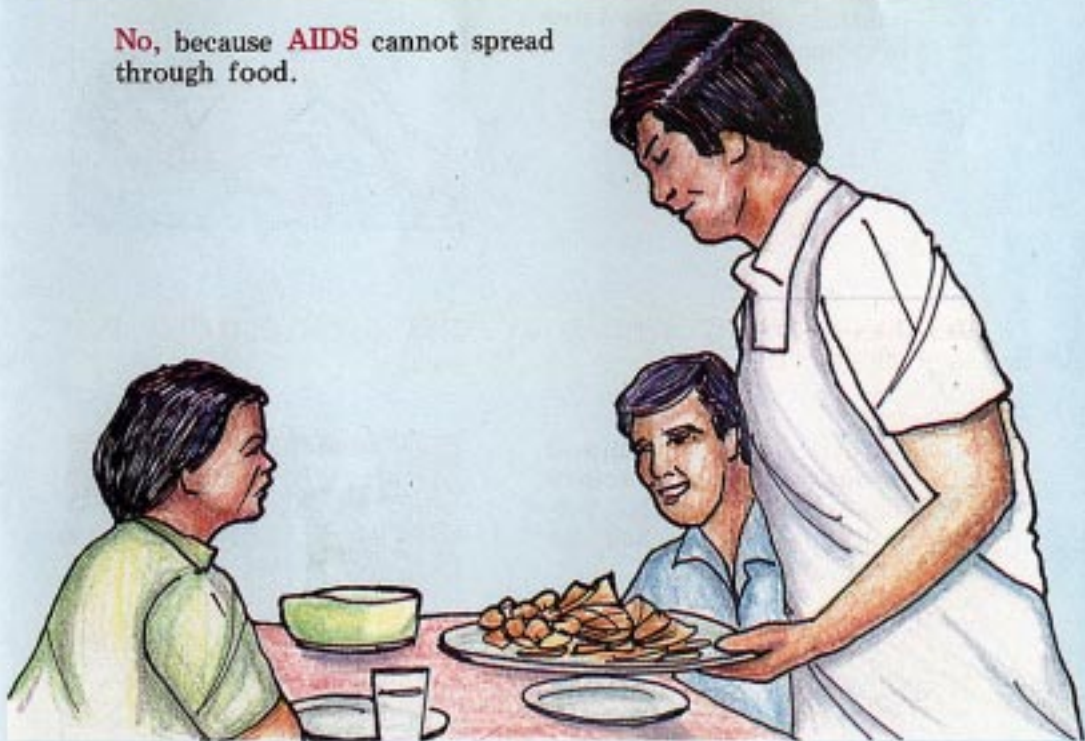
6. CAN AIDS BE SPREAD THROUGH PLATES, SPOONS AND GLASSES USED BY AIDS PATIENTS?



No. This is because the **AIDS** virus cannot survive long outside the human body. Normal washing of plates, bowls, spoons and glasses will kill the **AIDS** virus

7. CAN YOU GET AIDS BY EATING FOOD PREPARED BY AN AIDS PATIENT?

No, because **AIDS** cannot spread through food.





**8. CAN AIDS BE SPREAD THROUGH THE USE OF PUBLIC TOILETS, TELEPHONE AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT?**

**AIDS** cannot be spread through the use of public utilities because the **AIDS** virus cannot be spread through:—

- water
- air
- food
- contact with the personal items of **AIDS** patients.

**9. CAN AIDS BE SPREAD THROUGH THE USE OF SWIMMING POOLS?**

No. The **AIDS** virus will be killed by the chlorine which is usually added to the water in swimming pools.



**10. CAN AIDS BE SPREAD BY TRYING ON CLOTHES IN SHOPS/STORES?**

No. **AIDS** cannot be spread through the air or by touching articles that have previously been touched by **AIDS** patients.



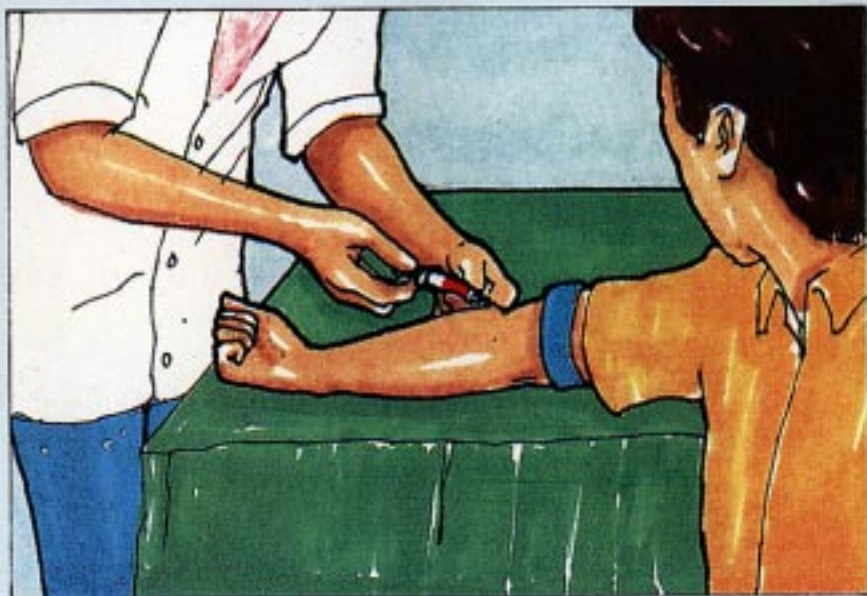
## 11. CAN AIDS BE SPREAD THROUGH MOSQUITO BITES?

No. There is no evidence which indicates that mosquito bites can spread **AIDS**.



## 12. WHAT DO YOU DO TO FIND OUT IF YOU HAVE BEEN INFECTED BY THE AIDS VIRUS?

You can find out whether you have been infected by the **AIDS** virus by undergoing a special blood test. This blood test is available at most government hospitals. Results of the blood test are **confidential**.





**13. WHAT DOES IT SIGNIFY IF THE BLOOD TEST IS NEGATIVE?**

This means that the **AIDS** antibodies cannot be detected. Usually this shows that you have not been infected with the **AIDS** virus. However, it normally takes six weeks to three months after a person has been infected by the **AIDS** virus before the antibodies can be detected. Therefore you may need to take the blood test again after a few months.

**14. WHAT DOES IT SIGNIFY IF THE BLOOD TEST IS POSITIVE?**

This shows that **AIDS** antibodies have been detected in your blood. It means that you probably have been exposed to the **AIDS** virus. However, you may still need to undergo further tests to confirm this.

**15. WHEN CAN A PERSON BE CONFIRMED AS AN AIDS PATIENT?**

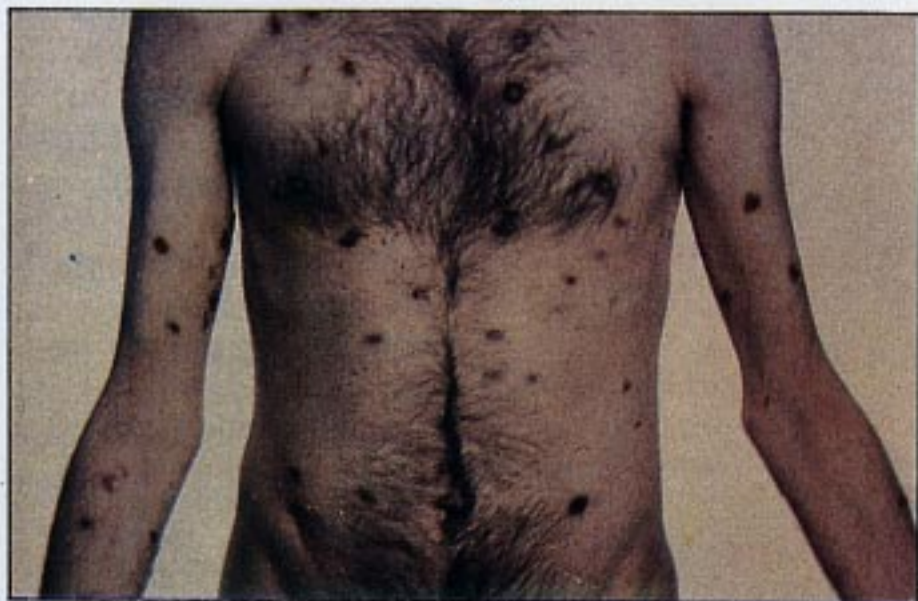
A person will be confirmed as an **AIDS** patient if he/she possesses the following characteristics:—

1. *His/her blood test is confirmed positive for the **AIDS** antibodies.*

AND



2. *He/she possesses signs and symptoms of AIDS such as:*
- i) Unexplained weight loss of more than 10%.
  - ii) Chronic (persistent) diarrhoea.
  - iii) Prolonged fever (periodic or all the time).
  - iv) Chronic (persistent) cough.
  - v) Swollen glands (enlarged lymph nodes) in the neck, armpits or groin.
  - vi) Recurrent herpes zoster infection.  
*Herpes zoster is a viral infection of the nerves and appears as blisters on the skin.*
  - vii) Candidiasis of the mouth and throat.  
*Candidiasis is a disease caused by a fungus.*
  - viii) Recurrent herpes simplex infection  
*Herpes simplex is a viral infection of the skin and is often seen as blisters around the mouth or genitals.*
3. *Possessing diseases associated with the collapse of the body's immune system such as:-*
- i) Pneumocystis carinii pneumonia (an infection of the lungs caused by a parasite)
  - ii) Kaposi's Sarcoma (a rare form of skin cancer)
  - iii) Other opportunistic infections which do not normally occur in healthy people



*Kaposi's Sarcoma*



*Swollen lymph node in the neck of a patient*



*Herpes zoster in the waist region*



*Candidiasis of the mouth and throat*



## 16. WHEN IS A PERSON CONSIDERED TO BE AN AIDS CARRIER?

A person is considered to be an **AIDS** carrier if his/her blood test has been found positive for the **AIDS** antibodies but he/she does not show any signs and symptoms of **AIDS**.

## 17. WHAT DO YOU NEED TO KNOW AND DO IF YOUR BLOOD TEST FOR AIDS IS POSITIVE?

1. You will be given the necessary treatment and medical counselling about **AIDS** including how to take care of your health and how not to spread the disease to others.
2. **You should not donate blood.**
3. You must use a condom whenever you engage in sexual intercourse (vaginal or anal) to protect your partner from being infected with **AIDS**.
4. If you are a drug user, stop this habit. Do not inject drugs or share needles and syringes with other addicts.
5. Infected women should avoid getting pregnant as they can pass the **AIDS** virus to their babies.

## 18. WHAT STEPS SHOULD BE TAKEN BY THE PUBLIC TO PROTECT THEMSELVES AND PREVENT THE SPREAD OF AIDS?

Based on the existing knowledge of **AIDS**, the following steps are recommended:—

1. Avoid sexual contact with any person whose background and current health status is unknown to you.
2. Avoid having multiple sexual partners and avoid sexual contact with others who have multiple sexual partners. This includes male and female prostitutes.
3. Avoid homosexual sex.
4. Avoid sex with persons suspected or confirmed to be **AIDS** carriers or patients. If sex cannot be avoided (such as spouses of **AIDS** carriers or patients) it is advisable to use a condom. Use of condoms can reduce the risk of getting **AIDS**.
5. Avoid injecting dadah.  
Do not share needles and syringes to inject dadah.
6. Do not share personal items such as toothbrushes, razors or any other items that can be contaminated with blood.
7. Take precautions when you travel abroad. **AIDS** is found in many countries throughout the world. **DON'T BRING AIDS HOME!**

# AIDS

## IMPORTANT REMINDER

All people who are positive for **AIDS** antibodies can infect others during unprotected sexual intercourse, in blood transfusions and through sharing of needles and syringes. However, there is no danger of them spreading **AIDS** through the air such as coughing or sneezing, by sharing eating utensils, touching, shaking hands, or hugging.

*Change Your Lifestyle To Avoid AIDS*

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A Publication Of  
THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH MALAYSIA  

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**"WE CARE FOR YOUR HEALTH"**

Diterbitkan oleh Unit Pelajaran Kesihatan, KKM, 1992 - 100,000 - B