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Health Department

fastFACTS

about Sedgwick County Government

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS)

April 6, 2011

What is AIDS?

AIDS is a disease caused by the virus, HIV, that damages the body's immune system and destroys its ability to fight illness. AIDS can also cause brain damage. Though you cannot die from AIDS, the disease does allow other infections and diseases to invade the body which can cause death.

How can you get AIDS?

Becoming infected with HIV can lead to AIDS. The HIV virus must enter into your blood in order to become infected. Certain behaviors put individuals at an increased risk for getting HIV.

These behaviors include:

- Having unprotected sex with a number of partners or with someone who has had many partners.
- Having unprotected sex with someone who is at risk, or is infected with HIV.
- Sharing skin piercing instruments, including drug needles.

Infected mothers can also pass HIV on to their babies before or during birth, or through breast feeding.

You **cannot** become infected with HIV through casual contact. Casual contact includes being coughed or sneezed on, using the same water fountain or swimming pool, shaking hands, hugging or eating food prepared by an infected individual.

How is AIDS or HIV diagnosed?

Only a physician can diagnose whether an HIV infected person has AIDS. There are three tests — blood, oral and urine that can determine whether or not a person has HIV.

How soon after exposure can a person test positive for HIV?

It can take up to six months after exposure to HIV for the test to show positive. Because of this delay, if you believe you may be at risk, but your first test is negative, you should have the test repeated in six months.

Where can I have a HIV test done?

The Sedgwick County Health Department, 2716 W. Central, offers confidential and anonymous HIV testing as well as counseling services for those who test positive.

Testing is done during normal business hours. For more information on testing or counseling services, call the Sedgwick County Health Department at 660-7300 or visit the Sedgwick County website at www.sedgwickcounty.org.

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