

WHAT ARE THE MYTHS ABOUT HIV/AIDS?

GET THE FACTS!

1) HIV/AIDS is a death sentence.

Not True: There is treatment for HIV/AIDS that allows people to live long and healthy lives.

2) HIV is not found in the Muslim community.

Not True: Muslims are not immune to HIV/AIDS and Muslims are affected or infected in Toronto and other cities in Ontario. Remember, HIV can infect anyone regardless of their race, ethnicity, religion, gender or class.

3) There's nothing I can do.

Not True: Everyone can do something! Become educated, help teach others in your masjid, school, begin to care, pray, and share your knowledge. Help break HIV stigma and discrimination that exists in our communities today. Encourage others to be a part of this fight against HIV/AIDS.

4) If I don't have HIV infection, then the disease doesn't affect me.

Not True: Any Muslim affected or infected with HIV/AIDS is still part of our community. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is reported to have said, "The similitude of believers in regard to mutual love, affection, fellow-feeling is that of one body; when any limb of it aches, the whole body aches, because of sleeplessness and fever." (Sahih Muslim)

5) HIV testing cost a lot and takes time.

Not True: HIV tests are free and available to everyone. There is a "Rapid Test" which takes 20 minutes to get an accurate result. You just give a few drops of blood from your finger tip.

6) It's hard to find a place to get HIV tested.

Not True: You can get an HIV test at your doctor's office, just ask. If you are uncomfortable testing at your doctor's office, you can get tested at a local HIV testing clinic. Some clinics offer anonymous HIV testing, where you do not have to provide your name or any identifying information, and some offer rapid testing. For more information on HIV testing clinics in Ontario contact the **AIDS and Sexual Information Line: 1 800 668 2437.**

WHO PREPARED THIS BROCHURE?

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WHAT ARE OTHER MUSLIM COMMUNITIES DOING?

Many Muslim communities around the world are active in HIV/AIDS work. Islam provides tools for helping prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS and helping support people affected or infected with HIV/AIDS through compassion and empowerment. By sharing knowledge and working together as one ummah we can make great efforts in the fight against HIV/AIDS. "{.. Verily God does not change men's condition unless they change their inner selves..}" The Glorious Qu'ran, Chapter 13, Verse 11.

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ISLAM AND HIV/AIDS:

What does Islam say about HIV/AIDS...

Africans in Partnership Against AIDS
Muslim HIV Testing Awareness Project (MHTAP)

What is HIV/AIDS?

Human Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV) is a virus which infects cells of the human immune system and results in failure of the immune system to fight off infections and diseases.

Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is the most advanced stage of HIV infection when a person can become very ill with serious infections and/or HIV related cancers.

What causes HIV/AIDS?

HIV is a virus that can be transmitted through body fluids, mostly from blood to blood contact. HIV can be transmitted during sex, from using infected needles, or from mother to infant during pregnancy, delivery, or when breastfeeding. There are no known cases of anyone catching HIV through sneezing, shaking hands, or from toilet seats or mosquito bites.

How can I protect myself from HIV/AIDS?

Everybody is at risk of being infected by HIV/AIDS. HIV is mainly transmitted through unprotected sex with an infected person. While abstinence from sex and faithfulness to your spouse in marriage is the best preventative measure, one does not always know the full history of sexual activity of one's spouse before marriage. Hence, the importance for all individuals to get an HIV test even before they engage in marital sex; counselling is a part of the testing experience. The use of condoms significantly reduces HIV/AIDS transmission. Avoid sharing needles for medicinal or social drug use as this transfers the sharing of body fluids.

How can I find out if I have HIV/AIDS?

You can get a simple blood test to find out if you have been infected with HIV. You can get a confidential test at your doctor's office, just ask, or you can go to a community clinic. Some clinics offer anonymous testing where you don't have to give any personal identifying information, and some of these clinics offer rapid testing, where you can get your test results in about 20 minutes. For more information about Ontario's 50 anonymous HIV testing clinics contact the **AIDS and Sexual Health Information Line: 1-800-668-2437**



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Is my HIV test private and confidential?

Yes. Getting tested is private and free. While the doctor can't give any information to anyone about your test, if you test HIV positive (which means you are infected), your local public health department will be given information about the result. They will work with you to notify anyone who you may have put at risk of getting HIV. If you test at an anonymous HIV testing clinic, no identifying information will be collected, and if you test positive, public health will not contact you, but the testing clinic will work with you to notify people who you may have infected. If you test HIV positive you should go to the doctor for medical advice. The doctor will re-test you for HIV and only public health will be made aware.



Is Islam against HIV testing?

No. Getting tested for HIV is just as important as getting screened for cancer, diabetes or any other disease or infection. Taking good care of your health and taking measures to maintain and enhance it is important in Islam. Every Muslim should make sure they do what they can to maintain good health.

What do Imams say about testing?

HIV testing is an important part of maintaining good health, even for pregnant women who are offered HIV testing by their doctor as part of their routine prenatal care. Although unsafe sex is universally acknowledged as a major factor in the spread of HIV/AIDS, sexual promiscuity alone is not an indicator of one's HIV status.

Is this about my sexuality?

No. Getting tested for HIV is about you being in control of your health. Remember many people get tested for HIV as part of the immigration process. Women should get tested for HIV during pregnancy. Globally about 85% of HIV transmission is from man to woman or woman to man that's why it's important to get tested and know your status.

Are we promoting sex outside of marriage?

No. This information is intended to educate the community about HIV/AIDS. Some people infected with HIV are unaware that they have been infected as they may not show symptoms and may not immediately feel ill after infection. The only way to tell if you have been infected with HIV is to get an HIV test.

What happens if I have HIV/AIDS? Where can I get support?

Ontario has medical clinics where you can get confidential treatment for HIV/AIDS. Most people with HIV/AIDS will lead healthy lives if they receive the proper health care. A person who has HIV is still a Muslim and we should treat them as a brother or sister in Islam. Imams advise that if a person is infected, he or she seek professional health care as well as non-judgmental services from the community. Community organizations like Africans in Partnership Against AIDS offer support groups, counseling and referrals to doctors. There are Muslim brothers and sisters working at AIDS Service Organizations and they provide services for Muslims.

"Whoever relieves a calamity that has struck a believer in this world, God will relieve for him one of the calamities of the day of Judgment, and whoever makes things easy for a person in trouble, God will make his matters easy in this life and in the hereafter, and whoever shields the faults of a Muslim, God will shield his faults in this world and the hereafter, and God will help and support His servant as long as he is helping and supporting his brother" (Sahih Muslim)

Will I be judged by the community?

No. Nobody has the right to judge you. God is the best of judges and it is haram to sit in God's seat! *"Whoever is kind, God will be kind to him; therefore be kind to man on the earth. He Who is in heaven will show mercy on you."* (Abu Daud; Tirmidhi)