

FQs DATING & RELATIONSHIPS

> CAN PEOPLE WITH HIV STILL HAVE SEX?

Yes, as with everyone it's very important that they practice safe sex with a condom.

> CAN HIV POSITIVE PEOPLE HAVE CHILDREN WITHOUT TRANSMITTING HIV TO THEIR CHILD?

Yes. Only 1% of babies born in the UK to an HIV positive mother contract the virus themselves. Special precautions can be taken to reduce the risk of mother-child transmission significantly.

> HOW DO YOU PREVENT MOTHER TO BABY TRANSMISSION?

The mother must strictly adhere to (stick to) her treatment plan and stay as healthy as she can, with the aim of decreasing her viral load so that it is as low as possible. Babies are very often born via a caesarean-section to prevent transmission during birth however; in the UK most babies can be born naturally. Mothers are encouraged not to breastfeed.

> IF THE MAN IS HIV POSITIVE HOW CAN HE HAVE CHILDREN WITHOUT INFECTING THE WOMAN?

A technique known as sperm washing can be used to significantly lower the risk of an HIV negative potential mother contracting HIV from the potential father and also the chances of the future child contracting the virus. The technique involves separating the seminal fluid from the sperm, as it is believed the virus is mainly carried in the seminal fluid. The 'washed' sperm is then used to either inseminate the potential mother at her most fertile or used in IVF treatment.

> HOW DO HIV POSITIVE AND HIV NEGATIVE PEOPLE HAVE A RELATIONSHIP?

A "mixed-status couple" is one in which one partner is HIV positive and the other is HIV negative. This is also referred to as a "serodiscordant relationship." Mixed-status couples face unique challenges, particularly around sexual intimacy. All couples, regardless of each partner's HIV status, should be aware of the need to protect themselves from sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. But for mixed-status couples, the possibility of infection is a constant reality. HIV positive and HIV negative people can have happy and healthy relationships by practicing safer sex.

> DO MORE HOMOSEXUAL PEOPLE HAVE HIV?

In the UK (and worldwide), more straight (heterosexual) people have HIV than homosexual people. That said, in countries like the UK the % of MSM (men who have sex with men) who are HIV positive is higher than the percent of heterosexuals who have HIV. See http://www.hpa.org.uk/webc/HPAwebFile/HPAweb_C/1317140300680

> WHY ARE GAY MEN MORE AT RISK?

Anal sex carries a high risk of STI transmission, because the lining of the anus is very delicate and easily damaged. The risk is just as high for a woman having anal sex.