



A2 ACTIVITIES TO REVEAL HIDDEN ISSUES

How HIV spreads



Why use this activity?

To show how HIV, and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), can spread in a community, and to help people to think about the risks and implications that HIV could have for them personally.

Please see **Tool A1: Revealing HIV: information for facilitators** for more on this issue, as well as the 'Basic information' section at the end of this activity.



A brief description

This activity shows how HIV can spread in a community, using an unusual hand greeting to represent having unprotected sex. It introduces discussion about HIV transmission, personal risk and getting tested for HIV.



You will need

- paper and scissors
- photocopies of the 'Basic information' on HIV and AIDS below (for literate participants who would find this helpful)



Time taken

30–40 minutes



What to do

- Cut up enough small pieces of paper for each person to have one. If there are fewer than 20 people in the group, write the number zero '0' on two of the pieces of paper, the number '1' on two pieces, and an 'X' on two pieces. The other pieces will be left blank. (If there are more than 20 people, write the number '0' on four of the pieces, the number '1' on four pieces, and an 'X' on two pieces.) Fold all the pieces and put them in a box, bag or bowl.
- Hand round the container with the pieces of paper and ask each person to take one and open it.
- Explain and demonstrate the following interesting, entertaining way of greeting someone. Say: *'Hold your nose or chin with your left hand, put your right arm through the gap created by your left arm, and shake right hands with somebody else doing the same thing.'*
- Demonstrate shaking hands like this with someone else.

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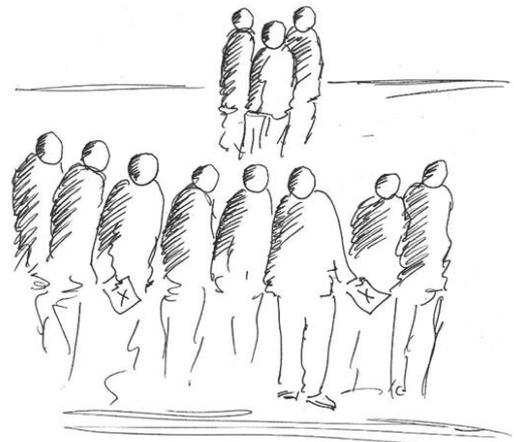
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- **Say:** *'If you have a '0' on your piece of paper, you must not actually shake hands with anyone, just wave at them to say hello. If you have a '1' on your piece of paper, you can shake hands with just one other person. If your paper is blank or if you have an 'X' on your paper, you can use this new greeting to shake hands with a **maximum of three other people**. This is voluntary – you can refuse to shake hands with someone if you do not want to. Everyone walk around and start shaking hands now.'*

- When everyone has finished, ask everyone to move to the back of the room or area you are using.

Explain and discuss the meaning of this exercise

- Ask the two people with an 'X' on their piece of paper to come forward.
- **Say:** *'Imagine that, for the purpose of this game, these two people were HIV-positive at the beginning.'*
- **Say:** *'The rest of you were HIV-negative. In this game, greeting someone in this unusual way represents having unsafe sex with that person. So anyone who greeted one of us has, according to this game, 'had unprotected sex' and exposed themselves to the risk of HIV infection. Can those who shook hands with these people come forward and join us here at the front?'*



Then turn to those still at the back of the training area...

Say: *'Anyone else who greeted anyone now standing at the front, please also come to the front. According to this game, you have also been at some risk of HIV infection, having 'had unprotected sex' with someone who 'had unprotected sex' with someone who is HIV-positive.'*

By now, most participants should be standing at the front of the training area.

Ask: *'How many people did you 'have unprotected sex' with (ie shake hands with)?'*

- If someone says, 'Nobody,' (eg those with a '0' on their piece of paper), explain that they have either been 'abstaining' from sex, or that they have always used a condom properly every time they have had sex. Ask them how they felt when refusing someone who wanted to shake hands.
- If someone shook hands with one person only (eg those with a '1' on their piece of paper), say that they were 'faithful', but they may still be at risk of infection if their partner 'had unprotected sex' with other people.
- Ask if anyone 'had unprotected sex' (shook hands with) more than three people (the maximum given in the instructions). What led to this? Was it because others were still

doing it and they felt pressured to join in, or because it was fun? Was it because they did not want to offend someone by refusing? How does this relate to real life?

Discuss:

- How many people were originally 'infected with HIV'?
- How many are now at risk of infection?
- What does this tell us about how HIV can spread in our community?

Explain: *'According to this game, sexual relationships have put many of you at risk of HIV infection. We have seen how HIV infection can spread like a wildfire. But you do not know whether you are actually living with HIV or not. We can help stop the spread of HIV if we know and understand how it spreads.'*

Collect the small pieces of paper you gave participants at the beginning of the activity.

Clarify basic information on HIV and AIDS

Ensure that participants are clear on the basic facts about HIV and AIDS. Ask questions and clarify answers using the notes below:

Ask:

- In which ways can HIV be transmitted?
- In which ways can HIV **not** be transmitted?
- Summarise the difference between HIV and AIDS.



Finding out more

- Tearfund and Samaritan's Purse UK (2011) *Think livelihoods! A facilitator's manual for applying a livelihoods lens when working with people, households and communities affected by HIV*
http://tilz.tearfund.org/en/themes/hiv/sustainable_livelihoods/
- Tearfund (2009) *Guardians of our children's health (GOOCH)*
http://tilz.tearfund.org/en/themes/hiv/preventing_parent-to-child_transmission/gooch/?d=1%3Fd%3D1
- Tearfund (2011) *HIV and your community: a facilitator's supplementary guide to Umoja*
http://tilz.tearfund.org/en/themes/hiv/church_mobilisation_on_hiv_issues/



Notes:

This activity is taken from Tearfund (2009) Guardians of our children's health (GOOCH)
http://tilz.tearfund.org/en/themes/hiv/preventing_parent-to-child_transmission/gooch/?d=1%3Fd%3D1

Related tools

- A1 – Revealing HIV: information for facilitators [A1: Health & HIV-1]
- A2 – HIV testing and counselling [A2: Health & HIV-1]
- A2 – Tackling HIV stigma [A2: Health & HIV-3]
- A2 – How HIV affects livelihoods [A2: Health & HIV-4]
- B – Attitudes towards disease and difference (Bible study) [B: Discrimination & inclusion-1]
- B – Loving the outcast (Bible study) [B: Discrimination & inclusion--2]
- B – Caring for widows and orphans (Bible study) [B: Discrimination & inclusion-3]
- B – HIV and AIDS and the glory of God (Bible study) [B: Health & HIV-1]

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HIV and AIDS – basic information

How HIV is spread

The human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) lives in the human body. Here are the only ways that HIV can be transmitted:

THROUGH UNPROTECTED SEX. Sex is the most common way for HIV to spread. It can be transmitted during unprotected vaginal intercourse (without a condom) between a man and a woman. HIV can also spread between two men or a man and a woman having anal sex without a condom (when a man's penis enters the anus of another person), or through oral sex (licking or sucking another person's sex organs).

PARENT-TO-CHILD TRANSMISSION. Babies can get infected in the womb, during birth or through the breast milk if their mother is living with HIV. This does not happen every time, and there are many things that both men and women can do to reduce the risk of this happening.

THROUGH BLOOD. If blood taken from a person with HIV is transfused into an uninfected person, that person will also get HIV. Donated blood should be tested for HIV and thrown away if it is infected.

THROUGH NEEDLES AND BLADES. HIV can also be transmitted through injection needles or blades that have already been used on another person with HIV and are used again without being sterilised. HIV can also spread from traditional tattooing or circumcision ceremonies if the same blade is used for several people, one after another without being properly cleaned.

How HIV is not spread

HIV is only found in sufficient quantities to be transmitted in blood, semen, vaginal fluid and breast milk. (Saliva, sweat and tears do not contain enough HIV to infect another person.) HIV has to get inside another person to cause infection. HIV does not spread through kissing, hugging, holding or shaking hands, sharing toilets, going to school or work together, sharing clothes, sharing food and drink, sneezing, coughing or mosquito bites.

The difference between HIV and AIDS

HIV (the virus) attacks and reproduces itself using particular white blood cells in a human body (CD4 cells). For several years after infection, the person can look healthy and have no symptoms, as their immune system is still strong. However, HIV eventually weakens the body's immune system to a point where other 'opportunistic infections' and illnesses can easily enter and stay in the body. This is called AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome). With access to treatment and good nutrition, it is possible to return from this stage to a state of living healthily with HIV.

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Antiretrovirals (ARVs)

There are medicines called antiretrovirals (ARVs) which a person living with HIV can start taking when their own immune system becomes too weak to fight off other infections, and they are starting to develop AIDS. ARVs can help the body’s immune system to recover for some time, by reducing the amount of HIV in the body, sometimes to such a low level that HIV tests cannot detect it. However, HIV remains in the body, and if the person stops taking the ARVs, the HIV in their body will usually increase again at some point. Once someone has started taking ARVs, provided they continue taking them every day as prescribed, they can often stay strong and healthy for many more years.

Can HIV or AIDS be cured?

There are many things that someone living with HIV can do to stay healthy and live longer. However, there is no known cure for HIV at present that can kill and permanently remove the virus from the body through treatment and medication. The current ARVs have to be taken for life to keep HIV under control.

Some traditional healers claim they can cure HIV and AIDS, and some church leaders claim they can cure HIV through faith healing. Although we cannot dismiss the possibility of such a miracle, there are no proven and scientifically confirmed or documented cases. We should always try to make the helpful distinction between ‘healing’ and ‘cure’ relating to HIV and AIDS. Healing can include various forms – psychological healing, emotional healing, spiritual healing, nutritional healing, immune system repair and restoration etc. All of these forms of healing can resolve health problems that were being caused by constant worry, anxiety, chronic depression and deprivation.

When people pray, they seek health in mind, body and spirit. God has also provided for our health through food, water and medicines – including ARVs. When Christians pray and take ARVs they can lead healthy, fulfilling lives, although the HIV is still in their bodies. It is therefore very important that faith leaders do not discourage ARVs, but rather encourage their community members who are living with HIV or sick with AIDS – and their carers – to seek holistic healing through prayer, love, acceptance, mercy and forgiveness, care, support and ARV treatment. The God of spiritual and emotional miracles is the same God who is behind scientific discoveries that help us in preventing, postponing and controlling diseases and deaths related (and unrelated) to HIV and AIDS.

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