

sextalk.

answers to your questions about sex and relationships

factoid

Among UA students who are single or casually dating, 1 out of 3 has never had sex – of those, 62% claim they are abstinent due to concerns about STDs. (Health & Wellness Survey 2004, n=1434)

Q. I recently slept with someone who is HIV positive. We used a condom and were very careful, but I'm still a little uneasy and thinking of getting tested for HIV. My question is, how soon after possible exposure to HIV can it be detected through testing? Should I get tested right away, or wait a few days?

A. If an individual becomes infected with HIV, his/her immune system will begin producing antibodies in reaction to the virus. Presence of these antibodies is what determines whether an HIV test is positive (antibodies present = HIV-infected) or negative (antibodies absent = *not* HIV-infected).

Most people who are HIV-infected will have a detectable level of antibodies in their bloodstream within three months of exposure. However, a small percentage may not test positive until six months after exposure. If you are concerned about infection and do not want to wait six months, then plan to get tested at three months with the possibility of a retest at the six month mark.

The Campus Health Service offers confidential HIV testing by appointment (621-6490). Anonymous testing sites include the Teresa Lee Clinic (791-7676), the Southern Arizona AIDS Foundation (628-7223) and Planned Parenthood (884-5562). These locations offer an initial appointment for counseling and testing, and then request you to return within two weeks for test results.

If you test positive for HIV, seek medical care immediately. Early medical treatment and a healthy lifestyle can help preserve well-being, as well as delay onset of AIDS and prevent other life-threatening conditions associated with HIV.

The surest way to avoid HIV infection is to abstain from sexual intercourse (vaginal, anal, or oral), or be in a long-term, mutually exclusive relationship with a partner whom you know is uninfected. Consistent (meaning every time) and correct use of latex condoms will significantly reduce risk of HIV transmission; however, it cannot guarantee 100% protection. For more information, visit the CDC Division of HIV/AIDS Prevention web page at www.cdc.gov/hiv/dhap.htm.

Have a question? Send it to sextalk@email.arizona.edu

SexTalk is written by Lee Ann Hamilton, M.A., CHES & Melissa McGee, Ph.D., MPH, health educators at The University of Arizona Campus Health Service.

