

Task: TEXT A

Read the text first, and then prepare to report on the main points of each section to your colleague based on your notes.

What is AIDS?

There is still no cure for Aids but a combination of various drugs can reduce the virus which causes Aids to virtually undetectable levels. Some people believe the drugs cure Aids and this has led to fears that people are becoming increasingly careless about the dangers associated.

Aids stands for acquired immune deficiency syndrome. Although ill, people with HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) can look and feel well.

As the virus attacks the immune system, an infected person will be open to a large number of illnesses. This means there is a wide variety of symptoms. HIV usually leads to AIDS, which is diagnosed when a person has developed one of several associated diseases with the virus, as well as underlying immune problems.

Associated diseases

HIV doesn't kill anybody directly. Instead, it weakens the body's ability to fight disease. Infections which are rarely seen in those with normal immune systems are deadly to those with HIV. People with HIV can get many infections. Many of these illnesses are very serious, and they need to be treated, some can be prevented; they are for example: pneumonia, influenza, skin cancer (Kaposi's sarcoma), shingles, dementia, human papilloma virus, yeast infections, meningitis, tuberculosis, pneumonia, neurological conditions and so on.

How is it transmitted?

HIV is relatively difficult to transmit as it does not live for long outside the body. It is carried in the semen, vaginal fluids, breast milk and blood. The main transmission routes are through sharing needles, sex, blood transfusions, transplants, getting infected fluid into open wounds, from a mother to her fetus and while breastfeeding.

High risk groups

Certain groups are believed to be at higher risk of developing the virus. These include those who share needles and children who are breast fed with infected milk. The disease was first massively described and reported in the USA in the gay community, however, not only gay men are at higher risk; the hazard involves anybody regardless of their age, sex and sexual orientation, religion, occupation or origin. Sex workers and those who have multiple sexual partners are also at higher risk than average. People with other sexually transmitted diseases are thought to be more likely to contract HIV than others.

Be ready to ask your partner about

- treatment
- history of the disease
- reducing the risk
- social implications