

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT HIV ABROAD

A guide for people travelling abroad on holiday, on business or to visit friends and family



IN THE PAST 10 YEARS ALMOST 2,500 PEOPLE BORN AND DIAGNOSED WITH HIV IN THE UK ACQUIRED THEIR INFECTION ABROAD. THIS IS ALONGSIDE THE MANY PEOPLE BORN OVERSEAS WHO ACQUIRED HIV ON HOLIDAY OR WHEN VISITING RELATIVES ABROAD.

WHAT IS HIV?

The Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) attacks the body's immune system - the body's defence against diseases.

HOW IS HIV PASSED ON?

HIV can be passed on through infected semen, vaginal fluids, rectal secretions, blood or breast milk. HIV is most commonly passed on through:

- Anal or vaginal sex without a condom
- Sharing needles, syringes or other injecting drug equipment

HOW DO I PROTECT AGAINST HIV?

You can protect yourself and others against HIV by always using a condom during sex. Anal and vaginal sex carry the most risk of HIV transmission but there is also a risk from giving oral sex to someone with HIV. Having another Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) also increases the risk of HIV transmission. See www.hivaware.org.uk for more details on the risks.

It's a good idea to pack your own condoms, as standards may differ from those in the UK or condoms may not readily be available.

Never share needles, syringes or other injecting drug equipment. If you need an injection while abroad, or if you have a tattoo or piercing, insist on seeing a fresh needle packet opened.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF HIV WHEN TRAVELLING ABROAD?

If you take the precautions outlined above, there is no additional risk of getting HIV through sex or using needles while abroad.

However, travelling abroad can present other risks of HIV infection which are not present in the UK. An estimated 5-10% of HIV infections in developing countries are due to blood transfusions, as often donated blood isn't screened for HIV and other infections. However the risk needs to be weighed against the risk of further illness or death if the transfusion does not go ahead.

WHICH COUNTRIES HAVE THE HIGHEST HIV RATES?

Rates of HIV do differ from country to country. Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest rates of HIV in the world. However certain areas of the Caribbean, Eastern Europe and South East Asia also have a high prevalence of HIV. But it is very important to protect yourself wherever you are.

HOW WILL I KNOW IF I'VE PUT MYSELF AT RISK?

If you have sex without a condom (or a condom breaks), there is a chance you have put yourself at risk of HIV infection.

You cannot rely on the assumption that a sexual partner will disclose their HIV status to you.

In addition, many people are unaware they have HIV or other STIs so you should always act with caution and protect yourself by using a condom during sex.

You will also put yourself at risk of HIV transmission if you share needles, syringes and other injecting drug equipment such as filters, spoons or other containers used to dissolve or heat drugs.

If you receive a blood transfusion in a developing country, there is also a risk of infection.

WHAT CAN I DO IF I'VE PUT MYSELF AT RISK?

If you feel you have put yourself at risk of HIV, you should get an HIV test when you get home. You can find a free and confidential UK clinic here fpa.org.uk/findaclinic. If you are not returning to the UK for more than a month you should seek medical advice locally.

If you have serious concerns that you have put yourself at risk of HIV, you can take Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP), a short course of HIV treatment which may stop you from becoming infected if taken as soon as possible after exposure to HIV (no more than 72 hours).

Access to PEP differs from country to country – and may only be available in large cities rather than nationwide. If you are concerned, you should seek out local medical advice as soon as possible. A local HIV organisation should be able to advise you if PEP is available – you can find a list at www.aidsmap.com/e-atlas.

IF I NEED TO GET AN HIV TEST OR PEP ABROAD, WILL I HAVE TO PAY FOR IT?

You should always ensure you take out comprehensive medical insurance which covers you for incidents abroad.

If you are travelling within Europe and you currently live in the UK, a valid European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) entitles you to free, or reduced-cost medical treatment, in a European Economic Area (EEA) country.

The card covers treatment which a suitably qualified medical professional would judge to be “clinically necessary”.

The EEA includes all European Union member state countries, as well as Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

HOW TO SAY CONDOM IN...

French préservatif (*pres-er-va-tif*)

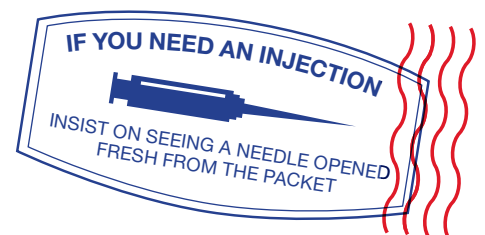
Spanish condón (*con-dOn*)

Thai thungyāng (*tuāng yāng*)

Polish prezerwatywa (*pres-er-vaty-va*)

Hindi nirōdha (*Ni-ro-d[h]*)

Turkish prezervatif (*pres-er-va-tif*)



WHO CAN I CONTACT IF I WANT SOME ADVICE ABROAD?

Contact a local HIV organisation, NAM has a list on its website www.aidsmap.com/e-atlas

You can also call the following UK numbers from abroad:

National Sexual Health Helpline: **+0044 800 567 123**

THT Direct: **+0044 808 802 1221**

FURTHER INFORMATION

For more detailed information on HIV visit:

www.HIVaware.org.uk

General advice on travel:

www.nhs.uk/nhsengland/healthcareabroad

www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk

www.hpa.org.uk/Topics/InfectiousDiseases/InfectionsAZ/TravelHealth

www.nathnac.org

Travel information for LGBT travellers:

www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/your-trip/LGBT-travellers

LIVING WITH HIV?

If you are living with HIV and travelling abroad, there is helpful information at www.plwha.org It's also a good idea to discuss your plans with your doctor beforehand so you are prepared.

You may wish to discuss issues such as vaccinations, tips for staying healthy, medicine storage and emergency contact numbers.

It is always advisable to carry your HIV medication in your hand luggage (in case of baggage loss) and have a note from your doctor if you are carrying large quantities.

You should also ensure you're aware of any travel restrictions within the country you're visiting, as sadly, some countries still have laws that restrict entry of HIV positive visitors to the country. You can find a list of rules country by country at

www.hivrestrictions.org.

NAT is the UK's leading charity dedicated to transforming society's response to HIV. We provide fresh thinking, expertise and practical resources. We champion the rights of people living with HIV and campaign for change.

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