

The High and Extreme Risks of HIV Transmission for Women via Anal Intercourse

Knowledge is Prevention!

To bring HIV infection down to zero, women need to know HIV’s most dangerous transmission route.

- Worldwide, HIV is the single largest killer of women of reproductive age.⁽¹⁾
- Heterosexual anal intercourse is a worldwide behavior.⁽²⁻⁶⁾
- For women, anal intercourse is always receptive and carries the highest transmission risk for acquiring HIV.^(7, 8)
- Receptive anal intercourse is **17 times riskier** than receptive vaginal intercourse.⁽⁸⁻¹⁰⁾ For details, see Table below.⁽⁹⁾
- Receptive anal intercourse is more than **2 times riskier** than needle-sharing during injection drug use.⁽⁸⁾

Estimated Per-Act Probability of Acquiring HIV from an Infected Source by Exposure Act ^A

Risk per 10,000 exposures to an infected source

	Receptive Anal Sex	Receptive Vaginal Sex		Receptive Anal Sex	Receptive Vaginal Sex
Chronic HIV ^B			Acute HIV ^C		
No condom	138	8	No condom	1001	58
one with STD ^D	356 ^F	21	one with STD	2581 ^F	150 ^F
both with STD	944	55	both with STD	6840	397
Condom	39	2	Condom	280	12
one with STD	100	4	one with STD	723 ^F	30 ^F
both with STD	264	11	both with STD	1915	79
Condom and PrEP ^E	3	<0.5	Condom and PrEP	22	1
one with STD	8	<0.5	one with STD	58 ^F	3
both with STD	21	1	both with STD	153	8

^A Derived from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), HIV Risk Reduction Tool ⁽⁹⁾

^B Lower HIV viral load-untreated, starts 2-3 months after initial infection

^C High HIV viral load-untreated, occurs during the first 2-3 months of infection

^D STD: Sexually Transmitted Disease other than HIV

^E PrEP: Pre-exposure prophylaxis. It is a medication that needs to be repeatedly taken over a period of time by people who do not have HIV infection but are at high risk for acquiring HIV

^F Could be slightly higher depending on which partner (inserter/receptor) has the STD

Worldwide, of the 37.9 million currently living with HIV, approximately 50% are women.⁽¹⁾ “In 2017, 66% of new HIV infections among 10–19-year-olds were among females globally—in eastern and southern Africa, 79% of new HIV infections among 10–19-year-olds were among females... Gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and drug use are among the many factors that can increase the vulnerability of young women and adolescent girls to HIV.”⁽¹¹⁾ Heterosexual anal intercourse is an important part of this vulnerability. **For women, there is a need for more specific HIV prevention information to supplement what is currently being done.**⁽¹²⁻¹⁶⁾

“Educating young people about HIV before they begin engaging in behaviors that place them at risk for HIV infection should be a priority.”

— National HIV/AIDS Strategy for the United States (2015). The White House Office of National AIDS Policy, Washington DC.

Informing women of the route that carries the highest risks of HIV transmission is an inexpensive primary prevention tool that definitely needs to become one of the essential first line pillars of prevention in the fight to bring HIV infection down to zero. Public knowledge of the high and extreme risks of HIV transmission via receptive anal intercourse will save lives. Knowledge of HIV’s risks of transmission based on routes of exposure will empower women to protect themselves and enable them to guide the next generation.

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