

Part 4 -

PROTECTING YOURSELF FROM HIV



A series on HIV/AIDS for Inuit Communities

D e d i c a t i o n



*Did you
hear me
when I
spoke?*

Leetia babysitting

Before her death from AIDS in 1992, Leetia Geetah traveled to many northern communities to dispel myths and educate Inuit about HIV/AIDS. Several years earlier, fear of AIDS had forced Leetia out of her community and into care of strangers in the south. That experience led her to become the remarkable AIDS educator she will be remembered as.

Through her honesty about her own life and her own health, other Inuit began to understand the risks and the challenges HIV/AIDS is for all of us. Leetia was able to show us the difference one person can make.

Message From The President

Veronica Dewar

I am very concerned about the health and well-being of Inuit. Becoming healthier involves caring about ourselves, learning about what makes us healthy and practicing what we learn.

Whole communities in other countries have been devastated because of HIV/AIDS leaving many children orphaned.

Many of us have heard of the story of Leetia Geetah and I personally know of

several other Inuit with HIV infection. Several Inuit have already passed away due to AIDS. I have learned of an alarming trend that more and more youth including Aboriginal youth are becoming infected. Youth infections are not just about lack of information or poor choices, they are closely tied to issues of self-esteem.

Many of us know how to protect ourselves from HIV, but don't.

This series of booklets is a tool for you to address your own and your community's needs for information. Everyone needs to know the facts. Our communities must decide how we are going to educate ourselves and our children. Traditionally, Inuit have known what to do to survive. HIV has presented us with a challenge. With information and action, it is a challenge we can meet.

Acknowledgments

Special thanks to the Steering Committee Members: Obed Anoe, Olive Binder, Roda Grey, Vinnie Karetak, Morty Iqqaqsaq, Elena Labranche, Roger Mannilaq, Louisa Ukaliannuk, Maggie Webb, Zipporah Ypma, without whose direction this project could not have been completed. Thanks to our author, Todd Armstrong, our coordinator, Catherine Carry and our editors Veronica Dewar, Tracy O'Hearn and Janet McGrath. Thank you to our translators, Leonie Kunnuk for Inuktitut syllabics and K. Naeme Tuglavina and Edna Winters for Labrador orthography. Thank you to the more than fifty community reviewers including Dr. Brooks and Dr. Angel from the Ottawa Hospital whose input has been invaluable.

Forward

This six-part series provides basic information on HIV and AIDS. The titles are 1. *HIV/AIDS: The Basics*; 2. *Your Immune System and Testing for HIV*; 3. *HIV: The Risks*; 4. *Protecting Yourself from HIV*; 5. *Women and HIV/AIDS*; and, 6. *Sexually Transmitted Diseases and HIV*. This series does not use reported or estimated rates of HIV infection for Inuit populations because these numbers can be misleading and are always changing. Talk to a nurse, health worker or doctor at a nursing station or health centre for help with information or about services, treatment and care that are available to you in your community, your region or in urban centres. Pauktuutit has plans to prepare and distribute information for people living with HIV/AIDS and possibly other resources as funds become available.

PROTECTING YOURSELF

PROTECTING NUMBER ONE – YOUR BRAIN

Sexual urges and the idea of love are two powerful forces that can mix up how we think. Our best protections against catching HIV are a clear head and knowledge of the facts. Drugs and alcohol make it unlikely that we will use our brain wisely to make good choices. All protection against catching HIV needs your brain to be able to think clearly.

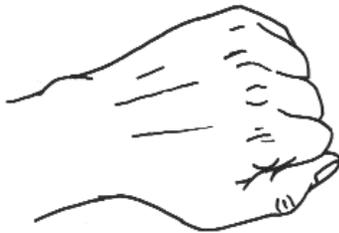
No one can tell if a person has HIV just by looking at them. It isn't that simple.



Thinking we will know who is HIV+ and who isn't will put us at risk.

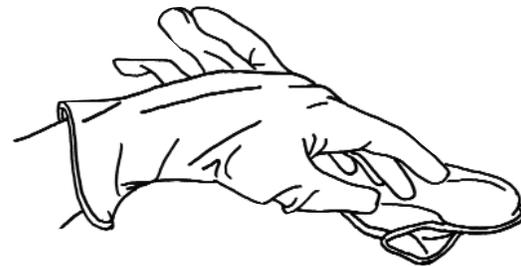
PROTECTION NUMBER TWO – YOUR SKIN

Your skin is a natural barrier that prevents HIV from getting inside your body, but it will only protect you if there are no



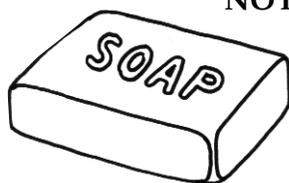
scrapes or cuts in it. Our hands and feet have small cuts or scrapes on them all the time.

Eating, brushing our teeth or using mouthwash causes small cuts inside our mouths. Any time we put something in our vagina or rectum, or put our private parts inside something, the friction causes small cuts in the skin. You do not have to be bleeding to have small cuts.



Putting latex gloves on your hands or a latex condom on your penis will add to the protection the skin gives us from HIV.

You can get latex condoms and gloves from your local health center, nursing station or pharmacy.



NOTE: If your skin comes in contact with the body fluids of another person accidentally, it is very important to wash the area with warm soapy water right away.

SEXUAL SAFETY: MAKING DECISIONS

Sexual safety is about more than using latex condoms. It's about THINKING before you act. The choices we make about sex will affect us mentally, emotionally, spiritually and physically for the rest of our lives.

Decisions about sex should include what our faith tells us, what family values we have been taught and what our bodies tell us is right. Deciding when and with whom you will have sex is a very big decision. It is a decision you should think about long and hard, but it is a decision you will have to make for yourself. What is right for one person may not be right for another.

Never allow anyone to pressure you into having sex for any reason. You have

the right to control your own body. You have the right to say "NO".



It is not only the risk of catching a sexually transmitted disease (STD), like chlamydia or gonorrhea that is a big part of your decision. Now, the risk of catching HIV is a big part of your decision, too.

BARRIERS TO MAKING GOOD CHOICES

Sexual urges are powerful forces that can mix up how we think.

Sex can be a wonderful part of a loving relationship. Love is not always a part of a sexual relationship.

Everyone wants to feel that they are loved or that they are in love. Sometimes our wish for love is so strong that we mix up physical attraction with love and sex.

Using drugs and alcohol affects how we think about ourselves and our choices. They make it unlikely that we can use our brain to make good choices.

Everyone needs good, clear information to make good decisions. You must understand the risks of HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and pregnancy to make good choices for yourself.

If you do not feel ready to talk about sex, HIV/AIDS, STDs and pregnancy with a person who has good information, then you are not ready to have sex. Prepare yourself.

CHOICES

There are many questions we must ask ourselves when we think about having sex. Here are some questions to think about:

- How old is old enough?
- Am I in love?
- When will I be ready to have sex?
- How do I know I am ready?
- How many partners are too many?
- Am I being pressured into sex?
- Should I wait until I get married?
- Can I support a child?
- Do I want to wait until I get married?
- Why am I having sex?
- Do I know how to protect myself?
- Am I really ready to be a parent?
- Do I want to be a parent?

These are only some of the questions you may have. You probably have many more questions. You should be ready to answer all of your questions before you become sexually active.

The right answers to your questions are inside you. There are as many different answers to these questions as there are people in the world. You have to accept responsibility for the choices that you make. You owe it to yourself to try your best to make good choices.



**CARE ABOUT YOURSELF.
THINK OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF UNPROTECTED SEX.**

ABSTINENCE

Abstinence is probably a word you have heard people use when they talk about sex. Abstinence is choosing not to have sex or deciding to wait until you are married to have sex. **Abstinence is a promise you make to yourself.** Many people believe this is the best choice and they decide to abstain from having sex for lots of reasons.

Most religions have very strong rules about sexual behaviour. You may want to consider what your faith has taught you when making decisions about abstinence.

Some people decide not to have sex for health reasons. They have learned the

facts and decided that the risks of HIV/AIDS, STDs, pregnancy and the effect of having sex too early are too great.

There are people who feel strongly that sex is a gift that they can give to someone they really love. They want to save that present for someone really special who will share their life with them.

Some people decide to wait because they know they are not ready to have sex. Choosing not to have sex is a sure way to be certain you do not catch HIV, an STD or get pregnant. **Think about it!!!**

MONOGAMY

Monogamy is a word people use to describe a kind of relationship, like a marriage. Many people believe it is a promise to only have sex with one person at a time. Most people believe that monogamy is about much more than sex. For them, it is also about sharing special emotions, feelings, sex and other activities with one partner in a long lasting, committed relationship. It is a promise to work through the hard times that all relationships have. **Monogamy is a promise that is made between two people.**

Most religions support the choice of monogamy. They have celebrations like weddings to mark the day two people become committed to each other. It is important to think about many things like your goals, dreams, needs and what your faith tells you about relationships when you are thinking about forming a relationship.

Too many people don't take enough time to think about what kind of relationship they want or the kind of person they want to have a relationship with. They don't think about the future. They only think about right now.

SERIAL MONOGAMY

Some people are abstinent before they form a monogamous relationship. Some have had other relationships and sexual partners. People who have had unprotected sex before they form a relationship could have caught HIV and may not know it.

Most people who start relationships believe they will last. If their relationship ends they may decide to have another one. Having one monogamous relationship after another is often called serial monogamy. This kind of monogamy can fool you into believing that you are not at risk of catching HIV.

Many people think the word monogamy will protect them from HIV, but it won't. It is very important to talk to the person you are going to have a relationship with about their past relationships and what monogamy means to them. Choosing monogamy does not mean that you do not need information about sex, HIV/AIDS, STDs or pregnancy. In fact, both people in a relationship must be sure they each have all the facts.

MONOGAMY CAN ONLY PROTECT YOU FROM CATCHING HIV IF BOTH PEOPLE IN THE RELATIONSHIP:

- are honest about their past;
- have two HIV tests in six months that are negative;
- keep their promise to not have sex with anyone else;
- have all of the facts about HIV/AIDS, STDs and pregnancy;
- do not share needles.

**IF YOU DO NOT KNOW THE PERSON YOU ARE SLEEPING WITH,
YOU ARE AT RISK OF CATCHING HIV!**

SAFE SEX – SAFER SEX

SAFE SEX

If people do not trade or share body fluids during the sex it is called safe sex. Kissing,

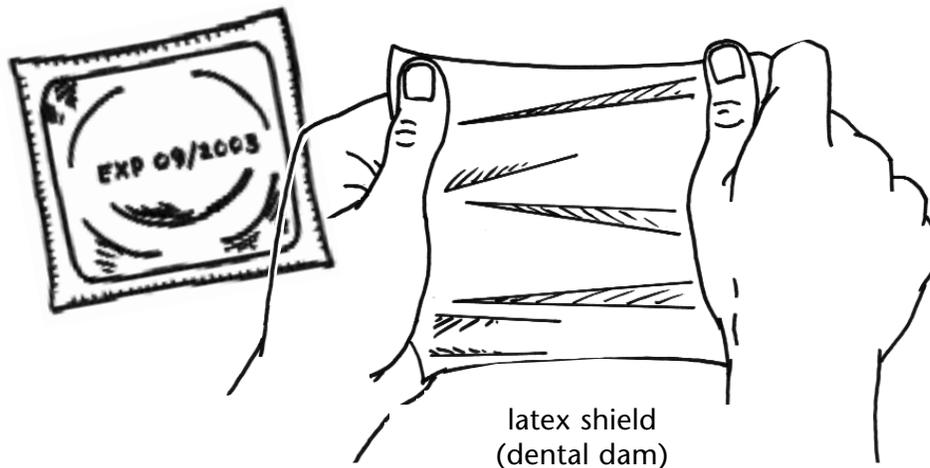
rubbing and massage are not behaviours that will cause you to catch HIV.

SAFER SEX

When people have sex like intercourse or oral sex there is a chance for HIV to get inside their body. Safer sex is what we call using a latex condom or other latex shield to stop the body fluids of another person from getting inside our bodies.

HIV is a dangerous virus. Even in a monogamous relationship if both you and

your partner have not been tested, or if you think your partner is not being faithful, you must ALWAYS use latex protection. One time may be all it takes for HIV to get inside your body. You can't tell if someone has HIV just by looking at them.



DO NOT USE SHEEPSKIN CONDOMS FOR HIV PROTECTION.

CONDOMS

Most people have heard that condoms will protect them from HIV. In fact, only condoms made of latex will provide protection against catching HIV. There are condoms that you can buy that are made of sheepskin. Sheepskin condoms will NOT protect you from HIV.

Even latex condoms are not perfect. Although they are tested to make sure they do not break or leak, accidents happen. The most common reason condoms break or do not work is that people do not know how to use them properly. Both men and women should learn how to use condoms correctly so that at least one of the partners is sure that the condom is put on right.

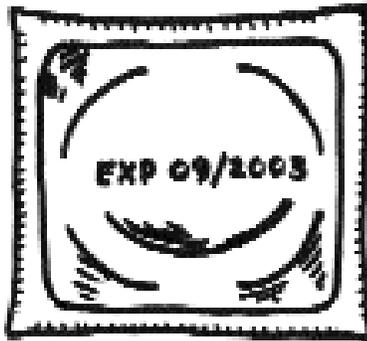
Using condoms properly takes practice. Men should practice putting condoms on and taking them off while masturbating.

This will help them to feel more comfortable and confident when they use them with a partner. Couples could practice putting condoms on together.

Condoms should be used every time you have intercourse or oral sex.

Learn the steps and know the facts. **YOUR LIFE DEPENDS ON IT!!** You can get this information from your doctor or nurse, health center, nursing station or hospital or from your local pharmacy. School counselors often have information they can share with you and the internet is also a good source of information. These

people want to help you make good choices and stay safe and healthy.



EDUCATE YOURSELF – FOR LIFE !

THE THIRTEEN STEPS FOR PROPER CONDOM USE

Before you consider having sex:

1. Take time to think about yourself, your dreams and goals, what kind of relationship you want to have and how sex will affect your life. Think about how your decision may affect other people you care about.
2. Get the facts about HIV/AIDS, STDs, and pregnancy and make sure you understand the information.
3. Go to the store or health unit and get latex condoms. Ask the pharmacist or health worker about which lubricants you can use with a latex condom.
4. Practice putting the condom on and taking it off properly until you are comfortable. Women can practice on a banana or a cucumber.

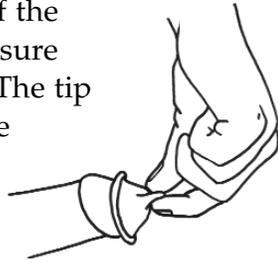
Once you are ready to have sex:

5. Read the package and make sure the condoms are latex. Make sure to check the date on the package. Condoms go bad just like milk. The date you are going to use the condom should be before the date on the package.
A square icon representing a condom package. Inside the square, there is a circular shape with a horizontal line across it, resembling a condom. In the center of the circle, the text "EXP 09/2003" is written.
6. Open the package carefully. Make sure that you do not tear the condom with your teeth or fingernails.

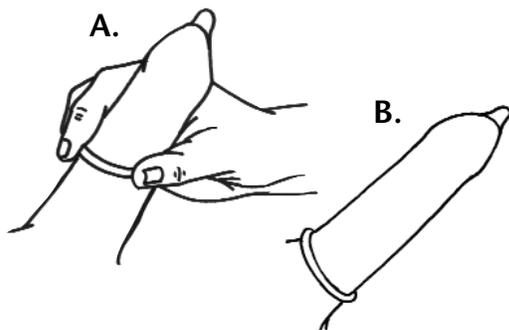
THE THIRTEEN STEPS FOR PROPER CONDOM USE

7. The condom will have a small tip on the end. Take hold of the tip and place it on the end of the hard penis.

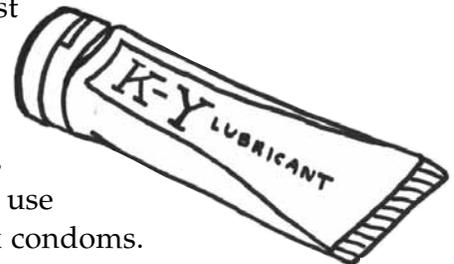
8. Squeeze the tip of the condom to make sure all the air is out. The tip should stay above the head of the penis.



9. Roll the condom down all the way to the base of the penis.



10. It is a good idea to put lubricant on the outside of the condom to make intercourse easier. A lubricant is jelly-like stuff especially made for latex condoms. There is an important rule about lubricant you can never forget. **NEVER USE LUBRICANTS MADE FROM OIL OF ANY KIND.** Lubricants made of oil like Vaseline, hand lotion, butter, Crisco or anything oily will make the condom more likely to break. Lubricants made mostly with water like KY jelly are the only lubricants you should use. You can get KY jelly at the drug store and sometimes at the health center or nursing station. Ask the pharmacist or health worker which lubricants are OK to use with latex condoms.



THE THIRTEEN STEPS FOR PROPER CONDOM USE

11. As soon as a man ejaculates (cums) his penis starts to shrink. He must always hold on to the base of the condom and take his penis out of his partner right after he cums. If he doesn't there is a chance the condom will slide off and get stuck inside his partner.
12. Tie a knot in the condom and throw it away. Never try to use condoms more than once.
13. Wash your hands. Relax together.



FEMALE CONDOMS

Female condoms are latex condoms that are made to be put inside a woman's vagina before intercourse. Women report that it takes some practice to get used to inserting the condom and removing it. The same rules apply to female condoms as they do to other barriers. They must be

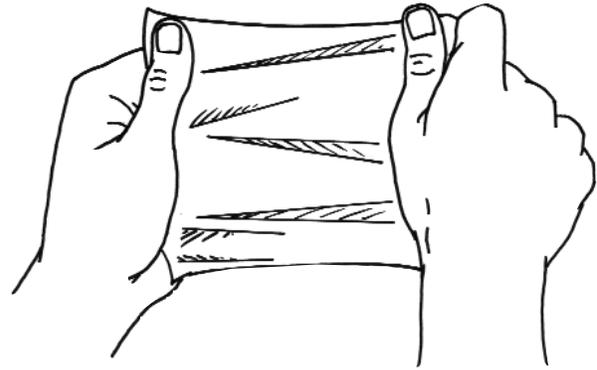
latex, used before the expiry date and they must be stored properly.

Female condoms are only available in some pharmacies. You will have to check with your local pharmacy to see if they have them.

PROTECTION FOR ORAL SEX

Oral sex has less of a risk of passing on HIV than intercourse does but there is still a risk. There is a big risk that you can catch other STDs like chlamydia, gonorrhea, hepatitis or herpes from oral sex.

To be as safe as possible any penis that is going to be sucked should have a condom on it. You probably will not want to use lubricant or lubricated condoms for oral sex. If you are going to perform oral sex on a woman's vagina, you can use a dental dam, a piece of plastic wrap or a



condom cut lengthwise and stretched out to stop any vaginal fluid from getting in your mouth.

DENTAL DAMS

A dental dam is the piece of latex that a dentist uses in your mouth when he is putting in a filling. If you ask your dentist or the staff at the health center or nursing station you will likely be able to get one. Using a dental dam is very easy. Before you put your mouth on the vagina or anus of another person, stretch the latex dental dam across the area to stop any fluids from getting in your mouth.

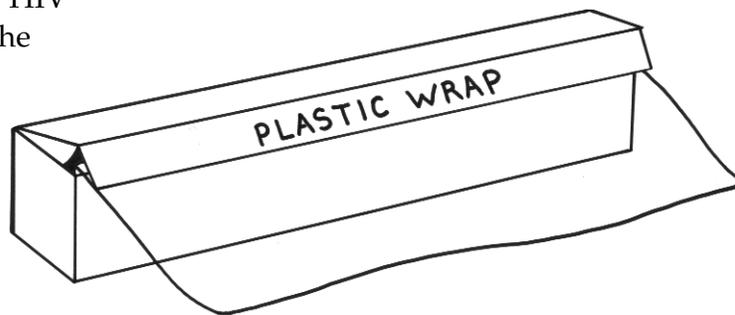
Just like condoms there are rules about dental dams.

1. They must be made of latex.
2. You should put a label on at least one side so you know which side has been in your mouth. This is especially important if you take a break and want to do some more oral sex.
3. The good news is dental dams can be washed and reused.

PLASTIC WRAP

Some times dental dams are hard to find or you just forgot to carry yours with you. Even though it is not made of latex, plastic wrap like Saran Wrap will protect you the same way. Tests have shown that HIV will not pass through it. Follow the same steps as you would if you were using a dental dam.

If you use plastic wrap, don't re-use it. Just tear off a new piece. You can not use plastic wrap in place of a condom.



CONDOMS FOR ORAL SEX ON A VAGINA OR ANUS

If you forgot your dental dam and you can't find your plastic wrap, you can use a condom the same way. Open the condom package carefully and unroll it. Take a pair of scissors and cut down the length of the

condom to the tip. It should open up and look like a small napkin of latex. Follow the same rules you would use for dental dams but throw the condom away after you use it.

SPECIAL SITUATIONS

LATEX ALLERGIES

Some people are allergic to latex. This makes using condoms and dental dams a little tricky. People with latex allergies need to learn about double-bagging.

DOUBLE BAGGING

If a man has a latex allergy, he needs to put a sheepskin condom on his penis first and then put a latex condom over top of it. The sheepskin will stop the latex from touching his skin and the latex will protect him from catching HIV or other STDs. If a woman is allergic to latex then the man should put a

latex condom on first and completely cover it with a sheepskin condom. The latex condom will protect the woman from HIV and other STDs and the sheepskin will stop the latex from touching her skin.

DOUCHING

Douching is a word for washing the inside of your vagina and anus. Some people do this to feel cleaner. Often they use a weak mix of vinegar and water.

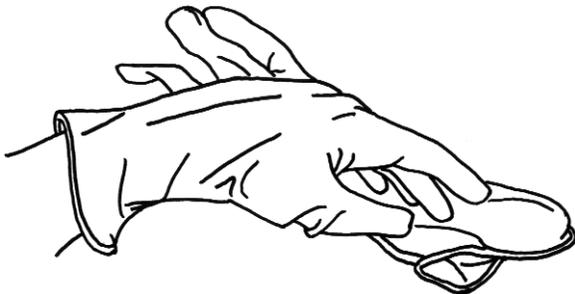
This kind of washing before or after sex **will not** stop HIV from getting into your body. In fact, it may make it easier for that

to happen. The water or vinegar may scratch the inside of your vagina or anus and cause small openings that would let HIV inside your body. **Douching is not a good idea close to the time you may have or have had sex.**

PROTECTION AT WORK – UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS

People who work with blood and body fluids are trained to use something called "universal precautions" to protect them from all kinds of germs including HIV. Universal precautions are a set of rules that are good for anyone who may come in contact with a person's blood or body fluids. The rules cover protecting your skin and how to clean things that may have come in contact with germs like HIV. They are good rules for everyone to know and use.

1. Wear latex gloves whenever you are going to come in contact with a person's blood or body fluids.



- Pick gloves that are the right size for your hands and put them on before you touch blood or body fluids.

- When you are finished and are ready to take the gloves off, pull the glove from your wrist by the cuff so that the first glove turns inside out.

- Use the inside of the glove you just took off to pull the cuff of the other glove so that it turns inside out.

- Put the used gloves in the garbage.

- Wash your hands with warm soapy water.



2. Wear a throw away apron to protect your clothes from blood and body fluids. Sometimes things spill or splash.

3. Wear a mask when you are not sure what kind of cough a person has. You won't catch most coughs people with HIV have. Tuberculosis (TB) is an infection which causes a cough you can catch. If you are not sure what kind of cough a person has it is best to put on a throw-away mask. People with HIV catch germs from other people very easily, so if you have a cough it is a good idea to wear a mask to protect them too.



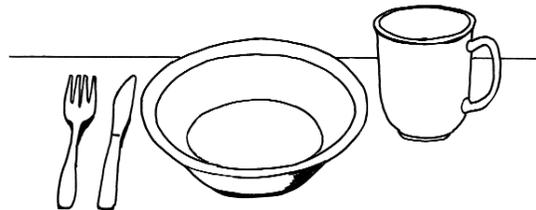
4. Hand washing is perhaps the most important part of taking universal precautions.

- Point your hands down toward the sink.
- Use lots of soap and warm water and wash your hands for at least 30 seconds.
- Make sure you wash all parts of your hands, especially around your fingernails and between your fingers.
- Wash your hands before and after you put on your gloves for extra protection.
- Dry your hands thoroughly.



5. Using a bleach mixture of one part bleach mixed in ten parts of water will kill most germs, including HIV. If blood or body fluids have gotten on tools or surfaces, wash the area with the bleach mixture.

6. If you are doing laundry that has blood or body fluids on it, move it as little as possible on the way to the wash. Use warm soapy water to clean it and dry it in the clothes dryer. If there is lots of blood or body fluids on the laundry you can add a small amount of bleach to the wash water.



7. Washing dishes, even for a person known to have HIV, requires no special precautions. Use plenty of hot soapy water and rinse thoroughly.

More information on universal precautions, needle-stick injuries and occupational exposure is available in *The Hand Book of Occupational Safety and Health* (Treasury Board of Canada, fifth edition) from the Canadian Association of Nurses in AIDS Care, c/o Diane Fillion, President, Module G, Ottawa Hospital-General Campus, 501 Smyth Road, Ottawa ON K1H 8L6, e-mail: dfillion@ogh.on.ca.

For more information about HIV/AIDS, read the other booklets in this series, contact the nursing station or health centre in your community, or try these:

Web sites

Health Canada

www.hc-sc.gc.ca/aids.htm

Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange

www.catie.ca

Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network

www.caan.ca

Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network

www.aidslaw.ca

Toll-free phone numbers

Help Line and AIDS Info Line (Western Arctic)

1 (800) 661-0844 or 920-2121 (Yellowknife)
from 7 p.m. to 11 p.m.

Nunavut AIDS information Line

1 (800) 661-0795 or 979-0520 (Iqaluit)
from 7 p.m. to midnight

Comité des personnes atteintes du virus d'immunodéficience humaine du Québec

1 (800) 927-2844 (Montreal)

Newfoundland and Labrador AIDS Committee

1 (800) 563-1575

