

Myths and misconceptions about HIV AIDS.

- **Myth No. 1: I don't need to worry about becoming HIV positive -- new drugs will keep me well.**

Yes, antiretroviral drugs are improving and extending the lives of many people who are HIV-positive. However, many of these drugs are expensive and produce serious side effects. None yet provides a cure. Also, drug-resistant strains of HIV make treatment an increasing challenge.

- **Myth No. 2: I'm HIV-positive -- my life is over.**

In the early years of the disease epidemic, the death rate from AIDS was extremely high. But today, antiretroviral drugs allow HIV-positive people -- and even those with AIDS -- to live much longer, normal, and productive lives.

- **Myth No. 3: If I'm receiving treatment, I can't spread the HIV virus.**

When HIV treatments work well, they can reduce the amount of virus in your blood to a level so low that it doesn't show up in blood tests. Research shows, however, that the virus is still "hiding" in other areas of the body. It is still essential to practice safe sex so you won't make someone else become HIV-positive.

- **Myth No. 4: My partner and I are both HIV positive -- there's no reason for us to practice safer sex.**

Practicing safer sex – wearing condoms or using dental dams -- can protect you both from becoming exposed to other (potentially drug resistant) strains of HIV.

- **Myth No. 5: I could tell if my partner was HIV-positive.**

You can be HIV-positive and not have any symptoms for years. The only way for you or your partner to know if you're HIV-positive is to get tested.