

Take the time to have a yarn about HIV

HIV Information for Community Workers



**Aboriginal
Health
Council**
of South Australia Ltd.

**Sexual
Health
& BBV** Program

Key Messages

- **HIV testing is important for everyone who is sexually active**, not just people perceived to be at increased risk
- **Symptoms of HIV may be mild or absent**; testing is essential for people to know their status
- **Testing is quick, confidential, and available** through Aboriginal health services, GPs, and sexual health services such as SHINE SA and Adelaide Sexual Health Centre
- **U=U**: When someone who is living with HIV is on treatment and has an undetectable viral load, they cannot pass HIV on to anyone else through sex
- **HIV is treatable**. People living with HIV can have long healthy lives with access to care and treatment
- **There are effective ways to prevent HIV** including condom use, PrEP, PEP, and TasP
- **Reducing stigma is important**. Respectful and non-judgmental conversations about HIV make it easier for people to seek testing and support

HIV awareness, prevention and testing continue to play an important role in keeping our people and communities healthy. We now have highly effective prevention methods, fast testing options, and treatment that enables people living with HIV to live long, healthy lives.

As community workers we can help by sharing clear information, normalizing testing, and supporting people to make informed decisions about their health.

What is HIV?

HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is a virus that attacks the immune system, which is the system in our body that fights infection to keep us healthy. When HIV is not diagnosed or treated, it can lead to serious illness and be life-threatening.

With treatment, people living with HIV can stay healthy, have families, and participate fully in community.

HIV can be transmitted through:

- Having sex with someone who has HIV and not using a condom
- Blood to blood contact, such as sharing injecting drug equipment with someone who has HIV, sharing tattoo or piercing equipment
- Pregnancy, birth or breastfeeding (this is rare in Australia because of treatment)

HIV can't be spread through saliva, sweat, tears or wee and you can't get it from kissing, hugging, sharing toilets, sharing food, skin-to-skin contact or from mosquito bites.

Undetectable = Untransmissible (U=U)

When someone living with HIV takes medication, it reduces their viral load (the amount of HIV in their blood) so low that it can't be detected on a test.

People living with HIV who are taking treatment and reach an **undetectable viral load cannot pass on HIV through sex**.

Testing for HIV

HIV testing is quick, confidential and available for free or at low cost through Aboriginal health services, GPs, and sexual health services such as SHINE SA and Adelaide Sexual Health Centre.

It's important to know that many people with HIV may not have symptoms, sometimes for years. Regular testing means that people can access treatment earlier, leading to better health outcomes.

Testing shouldn't rely on assumptions about someone's perceived risk. Anyone who is sexually active can benefit from knowing their status.

Preventing HIV

There are several effective ways to prevent the transmission of HIV, including:

- **Using condoms** correctly and consistently
- **PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis):** Medication that can be used by people without HIV to prevent transmission
- **PEP (post-exposure prophylaxis):** An emergency treatment for people who have been exposed to HIV. It must be started within 72 hours
- **TasP (treatment as prevention):** Treatment for people living with HIV that reduces their viral load to prevent transmission to sexual partners

Where to test or refer

Nunkuwarnin Yunti – Wakefield Street	182-190 Wakefield Street, Adelaide SA 5000	(08) 8406 1600
Nunkuwarnin Yunti – Paralowie	220-224 Waterloo Corner Road, Paralowie SA 5108	(08) 8254 5300
Muna Paiendi	Corner Mark and Oldham Roads, Elizabeth Vale SA 5112	(08) 8182 9206
Maringga Turtpandi	1 Gilles Crescent, Hillcrest SA 5086	(08) 7425 8990
Wongganga Turtpandi	11 Churches Street, Port Adelaide SA 5015	(08) 8240 9611
SHINE SA – Woodville	64C Woodville Road, Woodville SA 5011	(08) 8300 5300
SHINE SA – Hyde Street Practice	57 Hyde Street, Adelaide SA 5000	(08) 8300 5300
Adelaide Sexual Health Centre	260 Currie Street, Adelaide SA 5000	(08) 7117 2800
Gawler Health Service	21 Hutchinson Road, Gawler East SA 5118	(08) 8521 2000