

## FACTS & MYTHS GAME

Divide the room into teams and distribute "FACTS & MYTHS" answer sheets. Read the following list of statements and ask teams to decide whether or not they think the statements are fact or myth. Give teams a few moments to discuss each statement and decide on their answer before marking "fact" or "myth" on their answer sheet. When you have read all statements share the correct answer with the group and ask them to tally their scores. At the end, distribute HIV/AIDS fact sheets to all participants to take home.

### **1. Mosquitoes can transmit HIV from one person to another.**

MYTH – There is no evidence of HIV transmission through insects. When a mosquito bites a person, it does not inject its own or a previously bitten person's or animal's blood into the person being bitten. HIV lives for only a short time inside a mosquito and does not reproduce or survive in insects. Thus, even if the virus enters a mosquito, the insect does not become infected and cannot transmit HIV.

### **2. HIV & AIDS only affects gay men.**

MYTH – In North America, while the disease may have started largely within the gay population during the 1980s, it has always been a risk to anyone. In the U.S., 11% of HIV transmission is through heterosexual activity and 25% is spread through injecting drug use. For women, 41% of all infections occur through heterosexual activity, and 39% occur through injecting drug use. Children born to HIV-positive mothers are also at risk.

### **3. HIV can be transmitted through open-mouth kissing or "French" kissing.**

FACT – Open-mouth kissing is considered to be very low risk. However, if both partners have open cuts or sores in their mouths and one of them is HIV-positive, prolonged open-mouth kissing could allow the virus to pass from the infected person to their partner.

### **4. A new version of HIV has been discovered that is transmitted through the air.**

MYTH – HIV can only be transmitted through bodily fluids such as blood, semen, vaginal fluid, and breast milk. The virus cannot survive outside the body and, therefore, cannot be transmitted through the air.

### **5. HIV can be transmitted through the sharing of needles among injecting drug users.**

FACT – At the start of every intravenous injection blood is introduced into needles and syringes. Because drug injection syringes are airtight and often contain the blood of the injector, if any one injector is HIV positive the HIV can survive in the syringe and be transmitted to any other injector who uses the same needle.

### **6. HIV can be transmitted by contact with unused feminine (sanitary) pads.**

MYTH – While this is a popular urban legend, it is completely untrue. All new feminine products are perfectly sterile and safe. Of course, you would never want to re-use a previously used product or handle a used product that was not your own.

### **7. Medical professionals can be exposed to HIV infection through their work.**

FACT – In a limited number of cases, medical workers have contracted HIV from HIV-infected patients. This is usually due to an accidental needle stick of infected blood. This is quite rare and can usually be avoided by taking proper precautions.

### **8. HIV can be spread through saliva, tears, and sweat.**

MYTH – Though trace amounts of HIV can be found in these bodily fluids, the virus cannot be transmitted from one person to another through these means.

### **9. All babies born to HIV-infected mothers are HIV positive.**

MYTH – Transmission of HIV from an infected mother can occur during pregnancy, during labor or after delivery through breast milk. In the absence of any intervention, an estimate 15 to 30 percent of mothers with HIV infection will transmit the infection to their baby during pregnancy or deliver, and 10 to 20

percent will transmit the infection through breast milk during breast-feeding. With the use of special anti-retroviral drugs the rate of transmission before or during birth can be reduce to about 10 percent. However a mother is still at risk of transmitting the virus to her child through breast milk. Another option, such as feeding formula, should be used if available.

**10. The average cost of lifetime treatment for a person in the U.S. with HIV is about \$50,000.**

MYTH – The average cost in the U.S. at this time is about \$115,00per person for lifetime of treatment. While the cost of existing drugs may go down in the future, it is possible that new and more effective drugs might cost even more.

*Information and statistics obtained from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO).*



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