HIV Infection: Household Tips

Persons with the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and their families often have questions about how to protect others in the home from being infected. As a caregiver, you can give safe care and protect yourself by following these tips.

How HIV is spread to others
HIV infection is most often spread by contact with body fluids, contact with blood or when sharing needles. Body fluids are blood, urine, stool, vomit, semen, and vaginal secretions. HIV can also be spread to babies who are born to mothers who have the virus.

How HIV is NOT spread to others
HIV infection is not spread by casual contact, such as shaking hands, using the telephones, toilet seats, or swimming pools. Infection is also not spread by a person’s sweat or tears. Insect bites also do not spread HIV.

Laundry
• Wear gloves when handling items soiled with body fluids.
• If laundry is soiled with body fluids, place laundry in heavy duty plastic bags until you can wash them.
  ▶ Soak items soiled with body fluids in cold water, detergent and one cup of bleach for 15 to 30 minutes. Then, wash the items as you wash your other clothing.
  ▶ Machine dry on hot.

More on next page ➔
Learn more about your health care.
Clean Ups

- Clean up body fluid spills with hot, soapy water. Then, wipe the area with a cleaning product that has bleach. Or, make your own cleaner with 1:10 bleach solution (one cup of bleach mixed with 10 cups of water). For small spills, use ½ cup of bleach to 4 cups of water (or 1 quart). Wait for 10 minutes and then rinse the area with clear water.
- Soak sponges or mops used to clean up body fluids in a 1:10 bleach solution for 5 to 10 minutes. Don't rinse them in sinks where food is prepared.
- Pour body fluids down the toilet.

Preparing Food and Eating Utensils

- If the person with HIV infection has open, bleeding or oozing sores on their hands, bandages should be worn when preparing food. If bandages do not contain the sores, have someone else handle food.
- If the person with HIV infection has mouth sores, do not share eating utensils.
- Wash dishes with hot, soapy water. Dry the dishes after washing them. A dishwasher can be used if available. This will protect family members and the person infected from germs.
- You do not need to keep the dishes used by the person with HIV separate from those used by others.

Bathroom

The person with HIV may use the same toilet as other family members without special cleaning. If the person with HIV has diarrhea, bleeding, oozing or open sores or cannot control urine, clean the toilet each time he or she uses it. Wash the toilet with the bleach and water solution. Wait 10 minutes, then rinse with clear water.
Personal Items

- Do not share the person's toothbrush, razor, or other items that may have blood on them.
- Do not share earrings or other body piercings that may have body fluids on them.

Gloves, Gowns and Masks

- Gloves, gown, and masks are not needed for general care or casual contact, like hugging or having a meal together. They are not needed when bathing skin that does not have open sores.
- Use gloves when touching body fluids, like blood and urine.
- Wash hands with soap and water after wearing gloves.
- Wear a mask if the person infected with HIV has TB and is coughing.
- Wear a gown, mask and eye goggles if you may be splashed with body fluids. The mask and eye goggles can prevent blood, vomit or saliva from splashing into your eyes, nose, or mouth.

Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: health-info@osu.edu.