

INFORMATION ABOUT HIV FOR PATIENTS

HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) is the virus which can cause AIDS. Getting HIV is often a fear that people have after a sexual assault. For most individuals the risk of getting HIV from a sexual assault in Washington State is extremely low.

- **For women** the risk is less than 1 in 1000.
- An assailant must be infected with HIV in order to transmit it. If the assailant were HIV-infected, it is estimated that there is a less than 3% chance of transmitting it during sexual assault.
- In the Pacific Northwest, the rate of HIV infection in the male population is about 1 to 2 %. Most men who have HIV are homosexually active. The rate of HIV infection in injection drug users is 3-4%.
- Medicines are available which can decrease the risk of acquiring HIV. The medicines must be started within 72 hours of the exposure and taken for 28 days month in order to be effective. These medications can cause mild gastrointestinal symptoms (nausea, diarrhea, fatigue, and muscle aches) and are not recommended in very low risk situations.
- **For men** who have been sexually assaulted by men there is a higher, although still small chance of getting HIV. About 1 in 6 gay men in Seattle are HIV+, but the risk of HIV transmission, even without condoms is around 1%. Under these circumstances, the risks and benefits of preventive medicine should be discussed with a health care provider.

The risk of HIV infection is quite low. But this was not a risk that you choose to take.

If you wish, you can get blood testing for HIV at your follow-up appointment. A repeat test is performed 6 weeks and 3 months later in order to know for certain that you have not been infected, and a final test can be done 6 months after the assault. During this time, it is important to use condoms for all voluntary sexual relations.