



## Questions and Answers (PLWHA)

Q. What is PLWHA?

A. PLWHA means People Living with HIV/AIDS.

Q. Is it safe for me to be around PLWHA?

A. Yes! It is safe to work, study, live with, and play with people who have HIV/AIDS. It is safe for children to play with other children who are living with HIV/AIDS. A person can NOT get HIV/AIDS through almost every regular interaction between people, such as shaking hands, kissing, sharing clothes, sharing washrooms, sharing water and food, and many other things. Recall, HIV can live in only four fluids: male sexual fluids, female sexual fluids, blood, and breast milk. If a person does not interact with these fluids there is no risk of transmission. In many cases it is PLWHA who are the greatest teachers and social activists in regards to HIV/AIDS. Large organizations of PLWHA have changed laws and entire government stances on issues. PLWHA must not be discriminated against, instead PLWHA need to be supported, cared for, and given respect.

Q. How can I get HIV?

A. There are only three main ways one can get HIV. First, unprotected sexual contact with a person who is living with HIV/AIDS (this includes someone who may not know they carry the virus). Second is blood-to-blood contact. In this case the blood of a person with HIV/AIDS comes into contact with your blood. A common route of transmission in this case is the sharing of needles and blood transfusion (this however has been greatly reduced). Last, a child can be passed the virus by its mother if she is living with HIV/AIDS.

Q. What if blood or sexual fluid touches my skin?

A. Even if fluid carrying HIV comes into contact with your skin it will not cause an infection. The virus needs to enter a person's blood stream and our skin is a great protection for us. The virus needs to enter directly into our bloodstream.

Q. What precautions can I take?

A. There are a set of guidelines suggesting precautions that people can take to prevent HIV transmission. These guidelines refer in particular to those people who are working with PLWHA. They advise that when handling or cleaning any body fluids one should wear latex gloves. After, the surface where the body fluids were should be disinfected with bleach (or Clorox). One also needs to be aware of the disposal of such goods, such as rags used to clean up blood. These items should be discarded in a plastic bag and put in a closed garbage. Finally, when gloves are removed it is advised to also wash one's hands thoroughly with soap.