

AIDS

The Dreaded Disease



Today we are going to talk about that dreaded disease called AIDS.



AIDS is a disease spread from person to person. It is caused by a germ or virus called HIV.



There is no cure for AIDS, but the good news is that almost everyone can avoid getting it.



AIDS is now found in all countries of the world. Almost everyday you can hear something in the news about how many people are dying from it.



According to the World Health Organization, at the end of the year 2000, worldwide there were almost 40 million people infected with the germ that causes this disease.¹



More than 20 million people have died from AIDS since it appeared in the 1970's.² That is more than the people who have died in all wars since that time.

AIDS

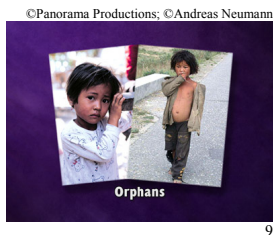
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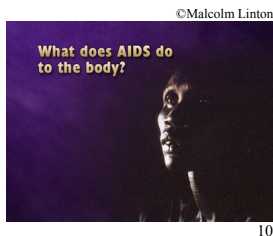
Most people living with the disease are in Africa and in Asia, but...



...the disease is also found in rich countries throughout Europe and North America.



Since it kills mainly people who are young there are now thousands of orphans left without a father and mother.



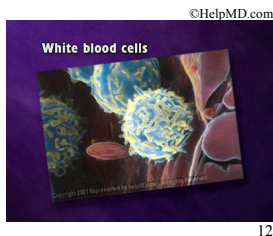
What does AIDS do to the body?

AIDS destroys our body's power to keep us well.



All people get sick from time to time with common diseases, such as the flu and diarrhoea.

Have you wondered why, most times, we get better from these diseases even without medicine?



This happens because the body has ways of fighting against diseases. One of the ways is by using (white) blood cells that kill germs.

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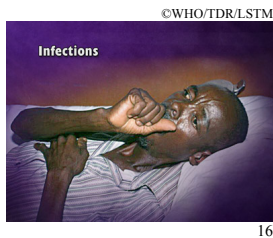
However, when the AIDS germ (HIV) enters a person's body, it slowly destroys many of these blood cells that protect us.



In the beginning, people with the AIDS germ in their bodies feel completely well and most don't even know they have it. This is very dangerous because they can give the germ to other people if they have sexual relations with them.



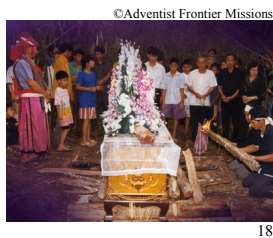
Gradually the person starts getting sick very often, even with simple diseases like diarrhoea and ear infections.



Infections like TB (Tuberculosis), pneumonia and others are also very common in people with AIDS.



After some time these infections get worse and even strong medicine cannot treat them; then the person dies.



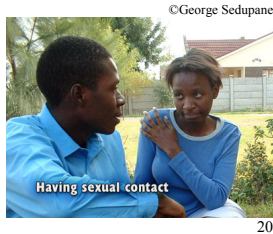
The sad news is that **every** person who has the AIDS germ in their body will get sick from it and eventually die.

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How is AIDS spread from person to person?



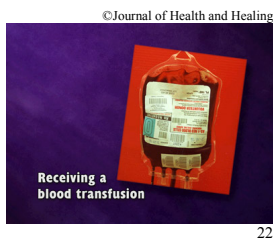
Having sexual contact with an infected person

Most people who have the AIDS germ (HIV) in their blood got it from having sex with someone who was infected with the germ, even though they looked completely healthy.

There are other ways through which one can get this disease. These are:



Using the same needle or syringe that someone infected with AIDS used.



Receiving a blood transfusion with blood from an AIDS infected person.



An infected **mother** can give it **to** her unborn **child**.



AIDS is **not** spread through

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shaking hands,



eating

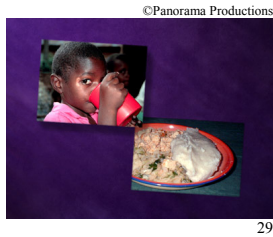


playing, or living together.

Also, AIDS is not spread by



food,



water,



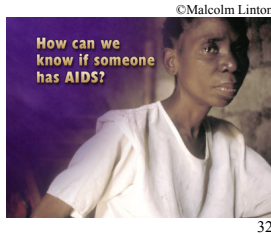
toilet seats, or

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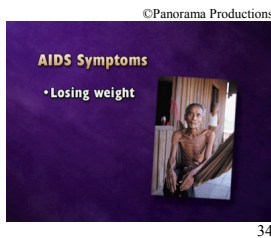
insects.³



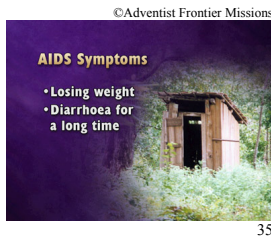
How can we know if someone has AIDS?



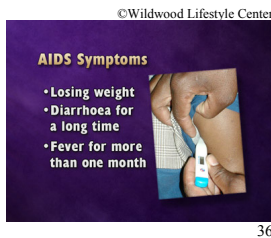
Because it is becoming a common disease in the world, we need to think about AIDS when someone starts getting sick **very often**, and has two or more of the following problems:⁴



If a person becomes thinner and thinner,



Has diarrhea for a long time, or

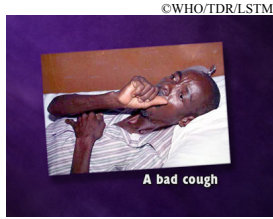


Has a fever for more than one month.

They may also have:

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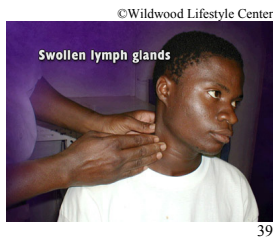
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A bad cough that lasts for a long time (more than one month)



A yeast infection in the mouth, or



Swollen lymph glands (anywhere in the body)

Besides this they can also get:



Rashes or painless dark patches on the skin



Warts or sores that keep growing and do not go away with treatment, especially around the genital area



And people with AIDS may feel tired all the time.

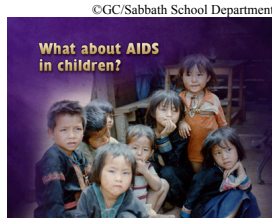
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Persons with AIDS are more likely to get tuberculosis or shingles. In shingles, painful blisters appear, usually on one side of the body.



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What about AIDS in children?



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If a woman who has the AIDS germ (HIV) in her blood becomes pregnant and has a baby, that baby can also have the germ in their blood and become sick with AIDS. Most times the germ gets into the child when he or she is still inside the mother's womb or during birth.^{5 6}



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As it is with adults, children who have the AIDS germ are not sick in the beginning. They may live for one or two years without getting sick with AIDS but by the time they reach four years of age, the sickness becomes obvious.⁷



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Most children with AIDS do not grow well. Like with adults, we should suspect AIDS in a child who is often sick with some of the sicknesses we mentioned earlier.



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Whenever AIDS is suspected in either adults or children, a blood test must be done to confirm it.

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What is the treatment for AIDS?



There is still no medicine to **cure** AIDS, but because persons with AIDS have difficulty in fighting infections, they should be given treatment for those infections. This means for example, that if they get TB they should get treated for it, and if they have diarrhoea they should also be treated for that.



In some countries there are medicines that may help the body to become stronger again and fight infections. These medicines however, **do not cure** AIDS. Besides this, these medicines can make a person feel very sick, they are expensive, and not freely available to everyone.



After some time the infections become too strong for the body to fight, even with medicine, and when this happens people die.



It is not possible to say how long a person with AIDS will live. This can vary from months to years. The body can be helped to be stronger and fight infections more easily. This may help the person to live longer and healthier.

Here are some things that can be done to help the body become stronger:



Eat well. If you can get plenty of vegetables, fruits, beans and nuts, eat more of these and less of meat and fish.

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Keep as active as possible. Physical work, such as working in the garden or doing manual labor is excellent for our bodies. To sit at home makes us weaker. Even a walk of 30 minutes every day is very good exercise.



Get 7-8 hours of sleep every night.



Drink **8-10 glasses of water** every day. People in hot countries need more.



Don't smoke. Don't drink alcohol. Don't use drugs. These will weaken your body.



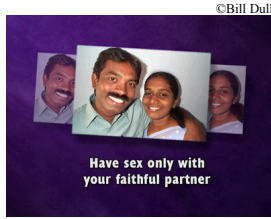
Get help from your health worker as soon as you get sick with an infection.



Because there is no cure for AIDS, we need to do everything we can to prevent getting it. Here are some things we should do to avoid getting this disease:

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Have sex only with your faithful partner.



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Use a condom **if** you or your partner has had other sexual partners. You may want to speak with your local health worker and ask about having a blood test done on you and your partner.



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Remember, God's way of one man for one woman for life is the best and only safe plan. Anything apart from this will make you and others unhappy and may lead to a lot of suffering and an early death.



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Do not get an injection unless you are sure the instruments have been boiled (sterilized) or are new.



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Make sure that tools used for circumcision, ear piercing and acupuncture are boiled or new.



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Avoid blood transfusions except when absolute necessary.

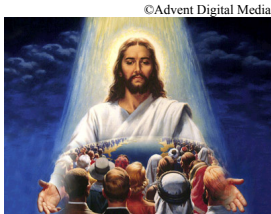
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Educate people about AIDS. We need to understand that AIDS is real, and is causing much physical and emotional suffering in the world.



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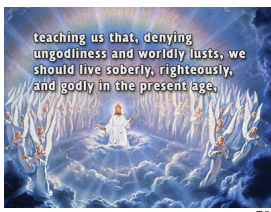
Many millions of people are now waiting to die from AIDS. They need to know that God can forgive them for whatever they might have done that gave them the disease. Many others are suffering innocently, having done nothing wrong to get it. They need to know about God's plan for a better life with Him in the land He is preparing for us.

In the Bible we read:



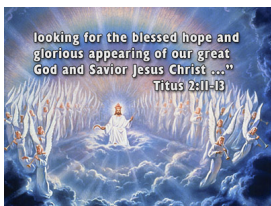
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"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, . . ."



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. . .teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age,



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. . .looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ . . ." Titus 2:11-13 NKJV

¹ AIDS epidemic update – December 2000. World Health Organization/UNAIDS, Geneva.

² AIDS epidemic update – December 2000. World Health Organization/UNAIDS, Geneva.

³ Werner, D. *Where There Is No doctor*, The Hesperian Foundation, 1999 p.399

⁴ Werner, D. *Where There Is No doctor*, The Hesperian Foundation, 1999 p.400

⁵ Approximately 85% of children with HIV are infected before or during birth.

⁶ Heese, H.de V. *Handbook of Paediatrics*, Oxford- Southern Africa, Cape Town, 1997 p.258.

The virus can also be passed on through breast milk. In countries where mothers can easily bottle feed their babies and where hygiene is good, mothers with HIV may be advised not to breastfeed their babies. If hygienic conditions are not suitable for bottle feeding and children are at higher risk of getting diseases such as gastroenteritis, the risks of not breastfeeding are greater than getting AIDS/HIV and mothers with HIV may be advised to breastfeed their babies.

⁷ Heese, H.de V. *Handbook of Paediatrics*, Oxford- Southern Africa, Cape Town, 1997 p.258