

SEVEN QUESTIONS ABOUT AIDS

What are AIDS and HIV?

Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is a set of symptoms that show that a person has become infected by a virus that attacks and damages the body's immune system. AIDS is caused by HIV (the human immunodeficiency virus). *HIV attacks the body's immune system*, especially the cells that help fight infections (T cells).

How does HIV work?

HIV invades the T-cells and tricks them into reproducing copies of the AIDS virus. After a while, the virus destroys the T-cell. *The HIV 'copies' then finds more cells to attack*. Finally, the virus destroys so many T-cells that *the immune system breaks down and it becomes defenceless against deadly invaders*.

What does AIDS-HIV do?

A person who is HIV-positive (who has HIV) *is under siege. HIV batters the body's defenses* until diseases which the *immune system normally fights off* become major threats. These diseases are called "opportunistic diseases" and include pneumonia, meningitis, tuberculosis and bacterial infections. So in fact, a person doesn't die of AIDS, they die of one of these other diseases that they have no protection against.

How do you get HIV?

You can only become infected if your blood comes into contact with the HIV virus. Blood, semen, vaginal secretions and breast milk can all carry the virus. The three most common ways people become infected are:

1. Having unprotected sex with an infected person;
2. Injecting drugs with a needle that's been used by an infected person;
3. Being born to a mother who is already infected.

You can also get HIV through receiving infected blood (in a blood transfusion for example).

How many people are infected?

In the year 2001, 36 million people were infected; 25 million in sub-Saharan Africa, 7.1 million in Asia and 940,000 in North America. Ninety percent of new infections are in developing countries. Twenty-two million people have died from AIDS-related illnesses in the past twenty years.

How do you cure AIDS?

At the moment, *there is no magic bullet that can cure AIDS*. Doctors are unable to *wipe out the infection once it has started*. However, there are drugs now available which can stop the progress of HIV and allow people with AIDS to live normal lives. These drugs are often very expensive, and are not often easily available in developing countries.

How do you stop AIDS?

Don't have unprotected sex (sex without a condom). If you use drugs, don't share needles. *It is possible to win the war against the HIV epidemic*, but everyone needs to have good information about preventing infection, along with support from society to help them act on this information.

ACTIVITIES

1. Read the text and answer the following questions

- * Which area of the world is most affected by AIDS?
- * What is the difference between AIDS and HIV?
- * Is there a cure for HIV?
- * Do people die of AIDS?
- * How do you get HIV?

2. Illness and Metaphor

Look at the words and expressions *IN ITALICS* in the text. Put them in the following metaphorical categories.

<i>Infection is an attack</i>	<i>Medicine is a Weapon</i>	<i>Beating the Disease is winning</i>

3. Disease and War

Look at the following pairs of sentences. Complete each space with one of the words in the box. You may have to change the form of the word. Use each word only once.

<i>battle</i>	<i>attack</i>	<i>invasion</i>	<i>infiltrate</i>
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The body is not immune to _____ from the disease.

The President ordered the army to prepare for an _____.

After three months the patient gave up the _____.

The general said that although they had lost the _____, they had not lost the war.

The cancer continued to spread and began to _____ the internal organs.

Fighter airplanes _____ an enemy base in the middle of the night.

Cancer _____ your body and takes over.

The small group of soldiers _____ the enemy's territory under cover of darkness.

Discussion

Many people argue that metaphors around diseases like AIDS and cancer increase the suffering of patients as they create very negative ways of thinking about disease and can inhibit them from seeking proper treatment. Discuss these questions in pairs.

- Do these metaphors for treating illness exist in your language?
- Do you think that they (the metaphors) can increase someone's suffering? Why?
- What is the attitude towards people with AIDS? What is the attitude towards people with cancer?
- Do you know anyone who has had AIDS or cancer?
- If you found out an older member of your family had cancer but didn't know it, would you tell them? Why?
- Would you treat a friend or family member differently if they had AIDS? Why?
- If you had cancer or AIDS, would you want to know the truth? Why?

Treating Illness is a War - Notes

An advanced vocabulary and idiom lesson. The aim is to highlight some of the metaphors in English that surround the treatment of diseases like AIDS and cancer. A sub aim is to provide some information about HIV/AIDS and provoke some discussion in the class on this topic. Teachers should be aware that in many parts of the world the topic of AIDS is shrouded in ignorance and prejudice. This material may raise issues of male homosexuality, sexual freedom and morality. It is recommended that teachers use this material with classes they know well.

WARMER

Write the word DISEASE on one side of the board. Ask students to make a list of all the diseases they know. Put these on the board. Did anybody mention AIDS? Explain that today they are going to read some information about AIDS and look at the language that is used to talk about disease.

READING – Seven Questions about AIDS

There are different ways of exploiting this reading. Here are three:

1. Copy the reading and cut it into seven different sections (one for each question). Cut off the titles and put the sections around the classroom. Write the questions on the board and tell the students to circulate around the class to take note of the answers. Then answer the questions on the next page.
2. Make one copy for every pair of students in the class. Cut the reading into two parts and give each pair half. They should read their half and then explain it to their partner. At the end, tell them to cover the readings and ask them to answer the seven questions orally.
3. Simply copy the reading and give it to each student. Tell them to read it and answer the questions on the next page.

ILLNESS AND METAPHOR / DISEASE AND WAR

These two sections are designed to highlight the metaphors surrounding diseases like AIDS. You could mention that the idea that treating an illness is like fighting a war is not restricted to AIDS, but to many different diseases. Students should do both activities in pairs. Check difficult vocabulary before feedback as a group. Ask them to categorise the expressions in 3.

ANSWERS 2

<i>Infection is an attack</i>	<i>Medicine is a Weapon</i>	<i>Beating the Disease is winning</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>HIV attacks the body's immune system</i> • <i>HIV invades the T-cells</i> • <i>The HIV 'copies' then find more cells to attack</i> • <i>...under siege</i> • <i>HIV batters the body's defenses</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>there is no magic bullet that can cure AIDS</i> • <i>to wipe out the infection once it has started</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>It is possible to win the war against the HIV epidemic</i>

ANSWERS 3: *INVASION; BATTLE; ATTACK; INFILTRATE*

DISCUSSION

To kick-start the discussion, dictate the following passage adapted from Susan Sontag's: Illness as Metaphor

As long as a particular disease is treated as an evil, invincible predator, not just a disease, most infected people will be demoralized by learning what disease they have. The solution is not to stop telling patients the truth, but to rectify the conception of the disease, to de-mythicize it. The disease is not a curse or a punishment.

Ask students to compare their dictations in pairs and to discuss what it means. Then move onto the discussion questions.