



FACT SHEET – 1 April 2019

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) Among Sailors and Marines

Fast Facts

- An active duty Sailor or Marine is diagnosed with HIV about every 5 days.
- Over 6200 active duty Sailors and Marines have been diagnosed with HIV since 1985.
- Sailors are diagnosed with HIV at about twice the rate compared to Marines.
- Most Sailors and Marines diagnosed with HIV are men (98%) and most are aged 20-29 (75%).
- Most male active duty Sailors and Marines (66%) diagnosed with HIV from 2010-2018 self-reported sex with a man in the 12 months preceding their HIV diagnosis.
- In 2018, black Sailors were diagnosed with HIV at over three times the rate than white Sailors.

How can I reduce my risk of getting HIV?

The only way to avoid sexual transmission of HIV is to not have vaginal, anal or oral sex. If you are sexually active, you can lower your chances of getting HIV by:

- Being in a long-term, mutually monogamous relationship with a partner who has tested HIV-free.
- Using latex condoms the right way every time you have sex – oral, anal and vaginal.
 - Have condoms with you when and where you think you might need them.
 - Insist on condoms with every partner and every sex act.
 - Put the condom on before any penetration.
 - Roll the condom all the way to the base of the penis.
 - After ejaculation, hold the condom at the base of the penis and withdraw while still erect.
 - Never use oil-based lubricants – like baby oil or Vaseline - with latex condoms because they can weaken the condom.
- Using HIV Pre-exposure Prophylaxis (HIV PrEP). See reverse side for further details.
- Using HIV Post-exposure Prophylaxis (HIV PEP). See reverse side for further details.



Washing your genitals, urinating or douching after sex will not protect you from HIV.

What about “pulling out”?

“Pulling out” or withdrawal is a strategy some people think will protect them from HIV. Although avoiding body fluids does reduce risk, any penetration without a condom is still risky because HIV can spread even without ejaculation. Always use a condom.



What is HIV PrEP?

HIV PrEP is a medicine (Truvada) that, if taken every day by a person who does not have HIV, can reduce their risk of getting HIV by up to 90%. HIV PrEP is appropriate for people who are at high risk of getting HIV, such as men who have sex with men outside a long-term, mutually monogamous relationship with an HIV negative partner. Every military medical facility can get you started on HIV PrEP if you and your doctor think it is the right strategy for you.



What is HIV PEP?

HIV PEP is medicine that can be taken for 28 days after an HIV exposure has – or may have – taken place (either a sexual exposure or a workplace exposure). HIV PEP can greatly reduce the likelihood of an exposure to HIV causing a permanent infection. But it must be started within 72 hours of the exposure. Every military medical facility can start you on HIV PEP if you and your doctor think it is right for you.

Can I tell by looking if a person has HIV?

No. Most people with HIV look and feel normal. About 1 in 6 people living with HIV in the U.S. are not aware that they have HIV. Some people try to avoid HIV by just asking a sexual partner if they have HIV. This is sometimes called sero-sorting and is not a safe strategy – because your partner may not know, or may not tell.

Can HIV be cured?

There is no cure for HIV. However, there are treatments for HIV that can enable you to live a long and healthy life.

How often should I get tested for HIV?

Active duty Sailors and Marines are tested for HIV every 2 years. BUT – men who have sex with men and people who have casual sex with many partners and without condoms should get a test at least every year. Talk with your military doctor about getting tested. Or get free, confidential testing in your community from: <https://gettested.cdc.gov/>. There is also a home HIV test kit available at retail stores and on the internet. If you use the home test kit please remember: just because your HIV test is negative does NOT mean that you are not at risk. Risk is based on your current sexual practices and number of partners. If you use the home test kit or you're tested at a non-military facility and learn that your test is positive, it is important you tell a military medical provider *right away* so they can provide an official HIV test and, if positive, start HIV care right away. The sooner you start the HIV medicines the better - for both you and your future partner(s).

What happens if I get HIV?

Active duty military members who test positive for HIV are provided excellent HIV care and usually remain on active duty. They can be assigned to ships and overseas locations on a case-by-case basis. There are very few occupational limitations for people just because of HIV, so most can continue in their job.

What about my sexual partners?

If you have been told you have HIV, it's important to (1) tell past partners so they can get tested (2) tell any prospective future partner that you have HIV and (3) always use a condom.

Where can I get more information?

CDC - <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/>

NMCPHC – HIV Prevention:

<http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/health-promotion/reproductive-sexual-health/Pages/hiv-prevention-resources.aspx>



NMCPHC: HIV Prevention page

This information was adapted by the Sexual Health and Responsibility Program (SHARP), Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center from unpublished data from NMCPHC and from CDC; Factsheet – HIV in the U.S.; http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/pdf/statistics_basics_factsheet.pdf.