



Make sure you pack this!

HIV, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) such as gonorrhoea and chlamydia and blood-borne viruses (BBVs) such as hepatitis B and C are more common overseas, especially in Africa and South-East Asia. In recent years, more Australians are getting HIV and other infections whilst travelling or living overseas.

When travelling for work or holidays, people's behaviour often changes. Travellers meet new people, consume more alcohol than usual and sometimes increase their sexual activity and number of sexual partners. People may also

have sex with a sex worker or have body piercings or get a tattoo. If you travel to countries where HIV, STIs and BBVs are more common, and you take part in risky behaviour, then your chance of contracting HIV, an STI or a BBV is greatly increased.

While some sexually transmitted infections are treatable, there is no cure for HIV. Once a person is infected with HIV, they are infected for life and can pass it onto their sexual partners and possibly future children. Even though treatments are available, they are often unpleasant.

Prevention is your responsibility.

The risk of contracting HIV, an STI or a BBV is dependant on your own behaviour.

How can HIV, STIs and other BBVs be prevented?

Only hepatitis B is preventable through vaccination. People are advised to have a course of hepatitis B vaccines prior to travel. HIV/STIs and hepatitis C DO NOT have a prevention vaccine.

Safe Sex

Always practise safe sex by using a condom and lubricant with ALL your sexual partners when travelling overseas. You cannot tell by looking at someone if they have HIV or an STI and they may not know they have an infection. Many STIs and BBVs, including HIV, often have no symptoms.

If you are going to have sex, a condom used properly with a water-based personal lubricant is the most effective protection from STIs and HIV. As condoms are not always readily available overseas, be prepared and take your own condoms and lubricant with you.

Casual partners and regular partners

Both at home and overseas, a casual relationship may become a regular relationship. It is essential that you both get tested for HIV, STIs and BBVs before you decide to stop using condoms. If it is not possible to have a test, don't take the risk of having sex without a condom. If you are planning to be overseas for an extended period of time get tested before you leave, pack a supply of condoms and lubricant and always practise safe sex.

Safer injecting drug use

Don't inject drugs. If you are going to take drugs, consider smoking, snorting or swallowing them to avoid BBVs. If you do inject drugs, always use new needles and syringes that have come straight from sterile packages, and never share other injecting equipment such as tourniquets, spoons and water. Small amounts of infected blood can remain in needles and syringes after use, or may be present on other injecting equipment.

Injections and Skin Piercing

It is advisable to avoid having piercing and tattoos overseas where you cannot be sure the procedure is sterile and hygienic. Try and avoid injections and surgery overseas, unless the matter is life threatening. Request that sterile equipment be used or make sure that any equipment comes from sterile packaging.

Transfusions

Not all countries screen donated blood for HIV and other blood-borne viruses. Try to avoid or postpone a transfusion of blood or blood products unless absolutely necessary.

Alcohol

Alcohol can impair judgement and lower your inhibitions. Don't let alcohol impair your judgement or use it as an excuse to forget about protecting yourself from HIV, STIs and BBVs. Make a decision to always protect yourself and your sexual partners by using a condom and lubricant.

How are HIV and STIs transmitted?

HIV and STIs are transmitted during vaginal, oral or anal sex with an infected person when you don't use a condom. HIV is also transmitted through blood-to-blood contact such as when sharing injecting equipment.

How are blood-borne viruses transmitted?

HIV, hepatitis B and C are blood-borne viruses (BBV) and are transmitted by blood-to-blood contact when the blood of a person with a BBV enters the blood stream of another person. This can occur through injecting drug use, acupuncture, body piercing, tattooing, needle-stick injuries, unsterile medical procedures and blood transfusion (in Australia, the blood supply is thoroughly screened and the risk of transmission through blood transfusion is extremely low). Sharing personal hygiene items that can break the skin and may have traces of blood on them (such as razors, nail clippers, toothbrushes and dental floss) is also a possible way to get infected.

HIV, STIs, and other BBVs CANNOT be passed on through:

- _ Coughing or sneezing
- _ Sharing knives, forks, chopsticks or cups
- _ Shaking hands
- _ Mosquitoes
- _ Swimming pools
- _ Toilets



Traveller's check list

Before you take off:

- Stock up on condoms and lubricant. If purchasing condoms overseas always check the expiry date
- Check that you have adequate medical and dental insurance cover
- Ask your doctor for advice on travel vaccinations and precautions depending on your destination

For further advice and information

See your local GP or a travel doctor

www.smarttraveller.gov.au
www.cdc.gov/travel

Travel Medicine and Vaccination Clinic (TMVC)

1300 658 844
www.tmvc.com.au

HealthInfo

1300 135 030

WA Sexual Health Services

www.health.wa.gov.au/services

FPWA Sexual Health Services

08 9227 6177 or 08 9227 6178
or 1800 198 205 (toll free for country callers)

WA AIDS Council

(08) 9482 0000 or www.waids.com

AIDSLine

08 9482 0044

Hepatitis Council of WA

(08) 9328 8538 or 1800 800 070 or
www.hepatitiswa.com.au

GET IT  ON!



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GOING OVERSEAS?



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HIV is more common overseas
Don't bring HIV home.
www.health.wa.gov.au/safesex