

If my story saves
someone's life,
I hope there was sense
to it happening...



5A

Dear Bára:

You used to be my best friend... until I met Lukáš. At the time, he was forty-two and perfectly groomed; he could entertain a whole group of people and absolutely sizzled with his experiences from his exotic travels. I felt ordinary and childlike next to him. One day he invited me to his house. I wanted him to use a condom, but he refused and joked by saying that it wasn't raining so there was no need to use a raincoat. I was embarrassed, and he was so perfect that I didn't want to lose him. I was taking birth control and hoped it would protect me from disease as well. Half a year ago we met Michal at the bar, and later that day he called me if I knew that Lukáš was HIV positive. He was just jealous, as he wanted to date me in the past. But the distrust started to gnaw inside of me. I finally suggested to Lukáš that we take the test together. He got upset, refused, and accused me of not trusting him. After two months, I plucked up the courage to take the test alone. That week of waiting was horrible.... "I'm sorry, but you're HIV positive." How could I have made such a mistake? How could he have done this to me? When we met, he coldly informed me that he wasn't interested and indicated that I could have gotten it from anyone. I met him with a woman yesterday; he acted as if he didn't know me. Should I have told her? I don't even know if he's positive. It isn't visible. I just know that he's been my only boyfriend for the last two years, and I got infected during that time. And it wasn't because of blood.

Can we see each other? You're the only one I have told. Are you able to hug and love me like you did before? Do you believe me?

Yours,

Pavla

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Dear mom and dad:

Do you remember when I came to visit at Christmas?

It has been exactly 15 years. You decided to help me out and sold your home – the very one that dad had spent years slaving over, working with old bricks – and you spent the evenings cleaning so you could pay for my football. I don't even know when it started. Perhaps I felt too inexperienced and wasn't good at telling jokes, so I drank more. I got expelled from school, and dad said I was a lazy drunk. I slammed the door behind me and went to work as a bartender. I worked a lot of overtime, but I wasn't earning as much as I hoped. And at the same time, I lost my driver's license. Well, I had a few shots and....bad luck. It seemed that nothing was going right. One day a friend of mine invited me to a party, and I had a snort of heroin. I liked the blissful feeling of relaxation and relief from my worries. And so I started with an occasional snort here and there. At another party, there were syringes, and I didn't even know whose they were. Getting rid of remorse and sinking into relieved oblivion... I was fired. I tried my luck at the slot machines using my last bit of money. Sometimes things worked out but I was borrowing more and more money. It was harder to find the money for my dose. But I never stole anything, really. Even though the police might be telling you something else. Then my friend Peta visited me and introduced me to his friend, who was a hotel owner. He let me stay there with its heated swimming pool and 30 rooms – all for me. He was on the road a lot and always brought me back expensive presents. He only wanted a small favor from me – sex without a condom. He was really nice to me, and when he organized a party, we all had our own syringes. There was no sharing. Then he fell ill and was the first to be diagnosed with HIV. He had pneumonia, but nothing helped. One month later, I had the same...and I was shocked. Now I am in rehabilitation, and I really want to make it. But apparently the virus will always be inside of me. We broke up. Sometimes I sit on a bench in the park, guessing what the shapes of the clouds above my head are, just like when Peta and I were small, enjoying the smell of Sunday lunch coming out of the kitchen. And imagine your eyes filled with tears. I know that I let you down, but I have never stopped loving you. Do you believe me?

Yours,

Martin

AIDS Help Line

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

 **800 144 444**

What's the difference between HIV and AIDS?

HIV is a virus that causes the human immunity to fail (in English known as the Human Immunodeficiency Virus). It attacks the white blood cells (so-called T-lymphocytes), builds into their genetic information, and reprograms them to a "production line" for the HIV virus. Instead of defending against infectious diseases and tumors, these white blood cells only "produce" other HIV viruses. This leads to a reduction of healthy white blood cells, and the human body cannot cope with illnesses in the same way a healthy immune system does (fungus infections, various kinds of sores, lung inflammation, as well as tumors). At this point, AIDS is in the picture, accompanied by a failure of immunity followed by death. (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome - a syndrome of acquired immune failure). HIV is therefore a virus, and AIDS is a disease.

What symptoms identify HIV primoinfection?

The initial symptoms after HIV infection are similar to influenza or infectious mononucleosis, including headaches, muscle pain, joint pain, fatigue, nausea, swollen/enlarged lymph nodes, fever, sometimes a rash, abdominal pain, or diarrhea. Some HIV-positive people don't have these symptoms despite the disease further developing in their bodies.

Which sexual practice is the riskiest?

Unprotected sexual intercourse with a person with an unknown HIV status. The highest risk is unprotected anal intercourse. Women are at higher risk of unprotected vaginal intercourse because semen contains more HIV viruses than vaginal secretions. Oral sex has a lower risk, but it's definitely not zero risk.

Are there any tests for HIV performed anonymously and for free?

Yes, you can find test sites on the website.

www.tadyted.com

How long after unprotected sex should I go for HIV tests to be 100% sure?

A 100 % certain result can be achieved from a test that is done in 3 months after this risky event, not earlier.

What is an immunological window?

It is the period of 3 months after contracting HIV in which antibodies cannot be verified in the blood yet. An infected person can transmit it to others without knowing he's positive.

I heard there's an HIV test that I can buy at the pharmacy and do it myself at home.

It is possible to buy such tests to determine the presence of HIV antibodies from saliva or capillary blood; these kinds of tests are called self tests (HIV self test) but are reserved for medical professionals. If you buy them, you could experience a false-positive because it can respond to other antibodies. This kind of result is called reactive and must be repeated in an accredited laboratory (e.g., State Institute of Health). The test can be anonymous and is free. If the test is positive, another test is done to verify the presence of HIV in the blood.

So far I have only had safe sex, but I have heard that French kissing poses a risk as well.

Yes, because the saliva of an HIV-positive person contains the HIV virus, but small concentrations should not lead to infection. There is a risk of blood contact when the lips, mouth, or tongue are injured.

How long will the HIV stay alive in the body?

If there is blood or semen on a public toilet seat and someone sits on it, there is not be any transmission, as the virus will have already died and will not enter the body through broken skin.

Is a condom enough to protect against HIV?

Yes, if used correctly throughout sexual intercourse, then it protects against HIV.

Do you have any of these symptoms 2 to 14 days after unprotected sexual intercourse (without a condom)?

In your Own Interest, Ask for an Examination



Pain and burning while urinating, white and green-yellow discharge from the urethra (from the genitals in women), or itching in the rectum or a sore throat. If you suffer from these issues, you might be suffering from **gonorrhoea**, which may appear without symptoms; when uncured, it can lead to various complications, including infertility.

Pain when urinating and/or occasional aqueous discharge from the urethra or female genitals can indicate the presence of **chlamydia**. Chlamydia infections can appear even without symptoms, and if not treated, it could lead to various complications: joint pain, ectopic pregnancy, or infertility. These infections are the most common.



Discoloration or small blisters on the genitals, rectum, and in the mouth, which later change to painless lesions and ulcerations. The lymph nodes then enlarge. **An increased temperature** and then 9 to 10 weeks after unprotected intercourse: **a rash on the trunk and legs or around the genitalia, or in the mouth.** These symptoms may indicate that you have contracted **syphilis**, which can appear without symptoms, damaging the brain, nerves, heart, blood vessels, bones, and skin. It can be transferred to the fetus in pregnancy or cause a miscarriage or congenital defects.





Genital itching or redness of the foreskin and/or glans, or vaginal burning, a thick, curd-like discharge from the genital area in women. If you suffer from these symptoms, you may have a **yeast infection**.

Small wart-like rashes on the genital mucosa or itching can mean a viral disease called **condylomata.** A specific type of the viruses (papilloma viruses) might lead to cervical cancer in women. Men could be transmitters.



Blisters in the genital area, rectum, or mouth, which soon turn into painful ulcerations, are called **sores (or genital herpes).** They often return when the affected person is weakened. Once you get a herpes sore for the first time, the virus causing it stays in your body for a lifetime, even after the sores have healed. You can get infected by another person who has a herpes sore.



If you develop a **fever, headache, muscle pain, joint pain, nasopharyngitis, swollen lymph nodes, or a rash on your torso or back 2 to 4 weeks after risky sexual intercourse**, it could be an **acute HIV infection**, leading to immune failure in the future known as AIDS. HIV infection can be asymptomatic and can only be verified by laboratory testing, known as the HIV test

If you notice **yellowish skin, a yellowish sclera (the white part of the eye), dark urine, and pale stools along with flu-like symptoms** within 2 weeks to 6 months, you may have either type A, B or C of **infectious jaundice**. The yellowing may be subtle.



Self-treatment of Sexually Transmitted Diseases Will Not Help You. See Your Doctor.

Avoid unprotected sexual intercourse to avoid transmitting the infection further and *visit a specialist or a clinic* as soon as possible – women should visit a gynecologist while men should visit dermatovenerology. Your medical condition is protected by mandatory medical confidentiality. Some of the symptoms subside without treatment, but the illness persists.

We recommend that you ask for *HIV and syphilis testing* whenever you contract a sexually transmitted disease, after unprotected risky sexual contact, after sharing a needle and syringe, or after sharing a drug solution. These tests are done 3 months after high-risk intercourse for HIV infection and in 5 to 6 weeks for syphilis. HIV infection, viral hepatitis, syphilis, and other sexually transmitted diseases can only be detected by laboratory blood tests in the asymptomatic period. *Treatment should begin as soon as possible.*



If you aren't experiencing any symptoms, this does not necessarily mean you have not been infected.

*The Only Reliable Protection against
Sexually Transmitted Disease is Mutual Fidelity.
Condom Use Is Next in Line.*

If a sexually transmitted disease is verified, *it is necessary for all your recent sexual partners to be examined.* Repeated testing is necessary because you or those closest to you may be in the incubation period, which means that one is infected but has no symptoms.



Please remember that *knowingly spreading sexually transmitted infections is a criminal offence* under § 155, No. 40/2009 of the Criminal Code. Any person that exposes another to the risk of contracting a sexually transmitted disease, even if due to negligence, shall be punished by imprisonment for up to one year.

internet counseling · list of HIV testing sites
on the web

tadyted.com



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Vydáno za finanční podpory dotačního programu MZ ČR „Národní program řešení problematiky HIV/AIDS“ na rok 2025 č. projektu 2715.