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HEADLINE: Advice From the Experts: Limit Partners, Be Clean, Use Condoms

BODY:
Avoiding AIDS infection does not require major life style changes for most people. But experts do suggest these steps to minimize your chance of getting AIDS:

*Limit sexual relations to one partner well known to you.

*Avoid high-risk contact with anyone you do now know well. High-risk contact may include heavy kissing in which large amounts of saliva are exchanged. It is unlikely that the virus can be spread by sharing food, but it is probably unwise to eat from the plate of a diagnosed AIDS victim, although even here the chance of contagion is considered remote.

*Except under a physician's care, don't use needles to self-administer drugs. If you must use intravenous drugs, never share needles with anyone.

*Avoid all sexual or intimate contact with any intravenous drug abuser.

*If your job -- dentist, nurse or undertaker, for example -- requires you to be in contact with other people's bodily fluids, including tears and saliva, wearing protective gear such as gloves and facemasks is prudent. Most important is meticulous hygiene, including heat sterilization of instruments.

*Homosexuals are advised to contact gay health clinics for guidelines on "safe sex." In particular, violent sexual relations seems to facilitate the spread of the AIDS virus, as does oral or anal sex.

*Heterosexuals are urged to take special precautions with bisexual partners. Precautions include use of condoms and avoidance of oral or anal sex with bisexual partners.Condoms are recommended by gay health groups as a protection against AIDS transmission. If lubricants are used, they should be water-based rather than oil-based and should come in tubes or bottles.

*Condoms can be ruined by the oil-based creams, and open cans of grease are fertile breeding ground for bacteria and other germs.

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The AIDS virus eschews cleanliness and is vulnerable to germicidal agents. Particular attention to personal hygiene, especially after sexual relations, is encouraged.

Most experts emphasize that natural expressions of affection should not be withheld from any AIDS victims for fear of contracting the disease. It almost certainly cannot be spread by hugging or cuddling or sitting next to child victims in schools, playing with them, holding hands. The loss of love is perhaps as cruel an aspect of this illness as its deadliness.-- Sandy Rovner