

Ask CDC

HIV... Is a Kiss Just a Kiss?

[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC – safer, healthier people.

Welcome to *Ask CDC*, the weekly podcast that answers *your* questions. I'm your host, Susan Laird.

This week's question is... can I get HIV from kissing someone?

The risk of getting HIV through kissing depends on the type of kiss. HIV is not spread casually, so kissing on the cheek is very safe. Even if the other person has the virus, unbroken skin is a good barrier. No one has become infected from ordinary social contact, such as dry kisses, hugs, and handshakes.

Open-mouth kissing is considered a very low risk activity for the transmission of HIV, but prolonged, open-mouth kissing could damage the mouth or lips. This could allow HIV to pass from an infected person to a partner. HIV could then enter the body through cuts or sores in the mouth. CDC recommends against open-mouth kissing with an infected partner because of this risk.

HIV can be spread when body fluids from an infected person enter the body of an uninfected person. These fluids include:

- blood
- semen
- pre-seminal fluid
- vaginal fluid, or
- breast milk

HIV can enter the body through:

- a vein (such as injection drug use);
- the lining of the anus or rectum;
- the lining of the vagina and/or cervix;
- the opening to the penis;
- the mouth;
- the eyes or inside of the nose; and
- cuts and sores.

Not having sex is the best way to avoid HIV. If you choose to have anal or vaginal intercourse, you should use a latex condom the *right* way *every* time. Most of the time, condoms work well, but condoms are more likely to break during anal sex than during vaginal sex. So, even with a condom, anal sex can be risky. Use large amounts of water-based lubricant, along with the condom, to reduce the chances of the condom breaking.

For more information about HIV transmission, go to www.cdc.gov/HIV OR call 1-800-CDC-INFO.

Thanks for listening. To submit *your* question to *Ask CDC*, e-mail us at askcdc@cdc.gov.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.