

Meaning of HIV/AIDS

HIV : Human Immune Deficiency Virus

AIDS: Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

This is a disease of the human immune system caused by the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). The illness is non-effectiveness of the immune system of the body.

Ways By Which People Can Be Infected with HIV/AIDS

- i. Sexual Transmission: When a person comes in contact with another person with HIV, during vaginal, anal or oral sex whereby the HIV person's semen, blood has been secreted into one's body, then such an individual is likely to have HIV or AIDS. The virus can enter a person's body through the mouth, or small tears that sometimes develop in the rectum or vagina during sexual activity.
- ii. Blood Transfusion : When an individual receives an unscreened blood and the blood already has HIV in it, then one is bound to get infected.
- iii. Sharing of Needles and other sharp objects: Through needles and syringes sharing, one can be infected. Sharing of intravenous drugs paraphernalia puts one at a high risk of HIV and other diseases such as hepatitis.
- iv. Mother to Child: An infected mother can infect her babies during pregnancy or delivery, or through breast feeding. But if a woman receives treatment for HIV infection during pregnancy, the risk of the baby is significantly reduced. The channel of transfer or transmission is through the mucous membrane or the blood stream.

Symptoms of HIV/AIDS

Many people do not develop symptoms at the initial stage but rather, there are some people who have prolonged flu-like illness for days to weeks. HIV symptoms include fever, headache, tiredness and enlarged lymph in the neck, these are some early signs but they disappear on their own within two weeks after this, the individual feels normal and there are no more signs or symptoms.

Much more later, the progression of diseases varies from few months to ten years. During this period, the virus multiplies actively and infects and kills the cells of the immune system. The virus destroys type of white blood cells called CD4 cells and by then all the immune system of the body are affected and the system becomes too weak to fight back.

HIV/AIDS symptoms include: lack of energy, weight loss, frequent fever and sweats, persistent skin rashes or flaky skin, short term memory, cough and shortness of breath, difficult or painful swallowing, severe headache and many more.

Preventive Measures To HIV/AIDS

Since the discovery of HIV/AIDS, in 1980, scientists are yet to have a cure for the illness. As a result of this, there is need for us to prevent ourselves from contracting the illness and the foresight, self-discipline and education, HIV infection and AIDS can be prevented. Some preventive measures are:

- i. Abstinence: The first and foremost effective measure to HIV/AIDS is abstinence, which means to desist from having sexual intercourse before marriage. In other words, it is not advisable to be having sexual intercourse anyhow.
- ii. Faithfulness to one partner: Another means of preventing HIV/AIDS is by being faithful to one partner. It is not advisable to be having indiscriminate sexual intercourse. Thus, partners must be faithful to each other.
- iii. Screening of Blood Before Transfusion: It is usually advisable to donate blood so as to save the lives of others, it is important to screen the blood being transfused. The proper screening of blood reveals HIV/AIDS status of the blood. Hence, it will prevent further infection if the screened blood is infected.
- iv. Avoid Sharing of Sharp Objects: People should desist from sharing objects which can pierce any part of the body and bring about blood. Such items are syringes, razors, manicure items, needles, tooth brush and so on.
- v. Public Enlightenment: Another means of preventing HIV/AIDS is by vigorously mounting public enlightenment campaign alone. It should involve interpersonal and traditional methods such as in a market venue on HIV/AIDS among others.

Stigmatisation of HIV/AIDS

Patient Stigmatisation or discrimination of AIDS patient refers to prejudice, abuse, negative attitudes and maltreatments of the people living with HIV/AIDS. This stigma exists worldwide, and it makes things more difficult for people trying to come to terms with HIV and manage their illness on a personal level. It also interferes with attempts to fight HIV/AIDS epidemic as a whole.

Ignorance about means of contracting HIV/AIDS makes people to stigmatise those living with HIV/AIDS. They believe that once you have contact with the people living positive, you would be infected. However, it is not so, therefore, you can relate freely with people living positive. Prejudice makes people to abuse the fundamental human rights of the people living positive. Such prejudice is usually borne out of the fact that people living positive are regarded as promiscuous and careless. They see them as harbingers of bad disease. Thus, they try to avoid them, such prejudice is not good. People living positive are not bad people. They are infected not because all of them are promiscuous. Therefore, regular counseling is important for the people living with HIV/AIDS. Proper education of the people living with HIV/AIDS is important. We should give them care and support. We should not run away from them, rather, we should encourage them from

time to time. We should relate with them like others as HIV/AIDS is a non-communicable disease.

Jesus Cared For The Sick

Whenever Jesus Christ come in contact with the sick people, He would always be moved with compassion and in the process heal them.

In John 4:46 – 54, when Jesus visited Cana of Galilee where he turned water to wine, there was a certain noble man, whose son was sick at Capernaum. When the man heard that Jesus was in Galilee, he came to him and begged him to come down and heal his son who was at his point of death. Jesus said to him, "Except you see signs and wonders, you will not believe". The noble man said to Jesus, "Sir come down so that my son will not die." Jesus told him to go his way for his son lives. The man believed the words of Jesus and went his way. His servants came to him and told him that his son lives and told him that the fever left his son on the seventh hour, the same hour Jesus told him that his son liveth.

In John 5:1 – 8 there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. At Jerusalem, there was a pool by the sheep market which is called in Hebrew language, Bethesda which had five porches. By the pool laid a great number of important folk of blind, holt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water by an angel who went down at a certain season and troubled the water and whosoever entered the troubled water first, was made healed of whatever disease he had. There was a certain man there, which had been sick for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him he knew he had been there for a long time. Jesus asked him if he would be like to be made whole. The Important man answered Jesus, "Sir I have no one, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool, but while i am coming, another step down before me." Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your bed and walk."

In John 9:1 – 7, as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth . The disciples of Jesus asked Him who sinned, the man or his parent, that he was born blind. Jesus answered them that neither had the man sinned nor his people, but that the words of God should be made manifest in the man. Jesus told his disciples that he must do the work of God while it was day that night comes when no man can work. Jesus said He is the light of the world. After the statement, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spit and anointed the eyes of the blind man with clay. He told the blind man to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. The man washed and came back seeing.

Lessons to Learn

Whenever Jesus saw a sick person, he was always moved by love and compassion and would end up healing the sick. Like Jesus, Christians would not discriminate against sick people, as long as the sickness is not contagious, rather they should show love and compassion. Christians should learn to relate well with the sick and encourage them that Jesus is still healing today and he is able to heal them.