

3.08 Sexual health - HIV testing

Nancy, 16, wants an HIV test. She had her first sexual experience yesterday. She didn't use a condom.

Nancy: My biology teacher told me that I should always use a condom to protect me from HIV, but I didn't have one and... it was just the heat of the moment... OK, I was drunk... no, I don't know the guy, I'll probably never see him again. I really want an HIV test.

Provide: In this country HIV is mainly spread by having unprotected sex, or through sharing dirty needles. We can test you with a blood test (or a saliva test) but we should probably repeat the test again in 3 months because the infection doesn't always show up straight away.

Elicit: Is there anything else that you want to know?

Nancy: If I've caught HIV, can you cure it?

Provide: The chances of you catching HIV from a single exposure are remote (even if your partner has the virus the chances of you catching it from him on a single encounter are about 1 in a 1000). There is no cure for HIV, but treatments can give you a normal life expectancy.

In future you really should use condoms when you have sex, especially when it's with people who are more likely to be infected.

(In the future it's really important that you don't share needles. I can give you the details of the local needle exchange programme. If you would like to get off drugs I can put you in touch with someone who would be happy to help you. You really should use condoms when you have sex especially when it's with people who are more likely to be infected - other drug users.)