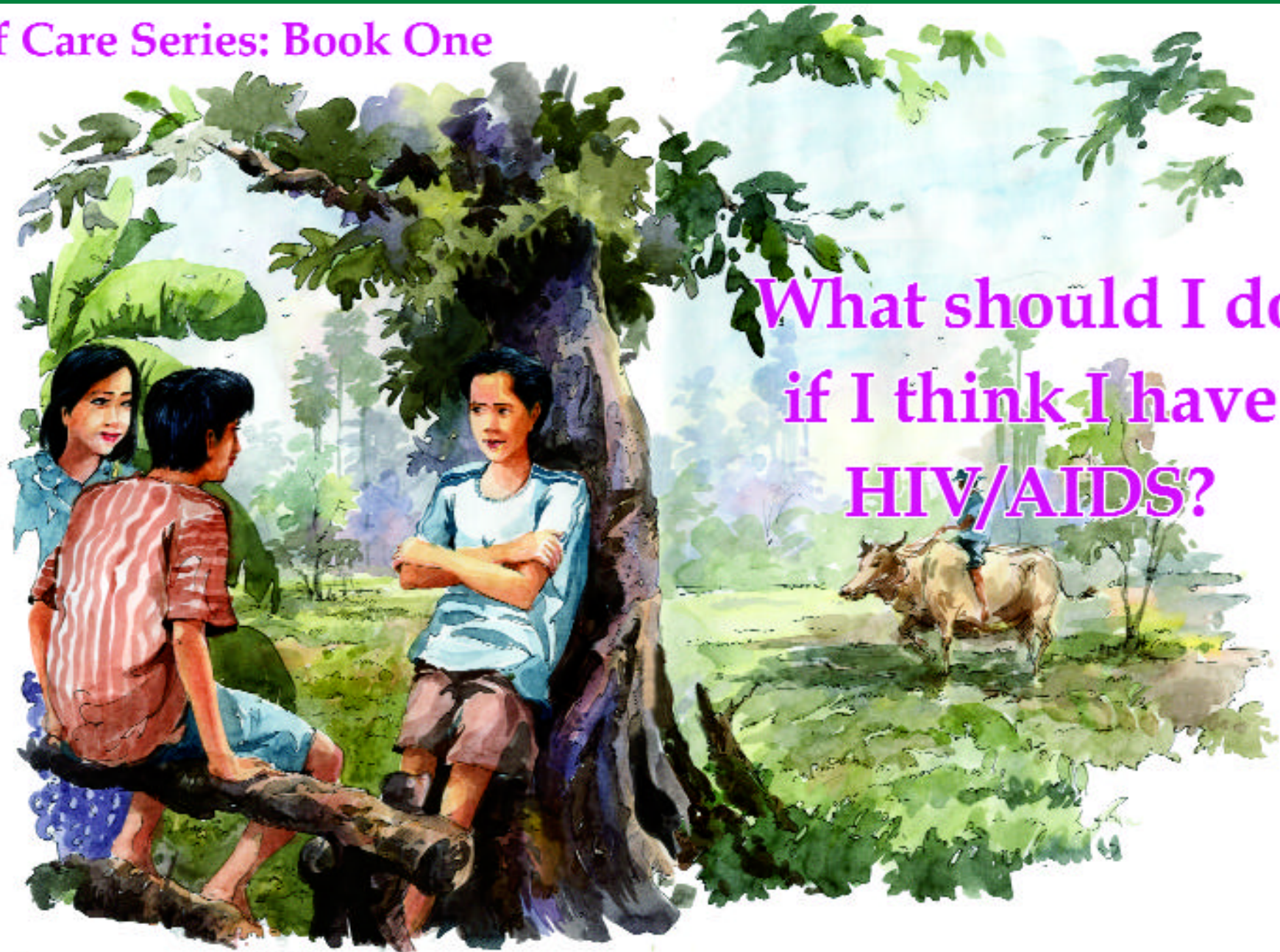


## Self Care Series: Book One



What should I do  
if I think I have  
HIV/AIDS?

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# What should I do if I think I have HIV/AIDS?



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## WHAT IS HIV?

HIV is a virus. A virus is a tiny germ. It is so small that you cannot see it. When it enters your body it can make you sick. HIV makes your body weak so it cannot fight other germs.

**HIV+ and working as normal**

### What is a person with HIV?

An HIV+ person is someone who has the virus that causes AIDS.

### Can an HIV+ person transmit the virus to another person?

Yes



**HIV+ and healthy**

**People living with HIV are people with damaged protective systems.**

**They can lead normal daily lives. Most of the time they are not sick. They look and feel well.**

# What happens when the HIV virus damages the body's protective system?



## 1. HIV+ AND HEALTHY

The protective system is slightly damaged but still strong.  
It is difficult for germs to enter the body.



## 2. EARLY AIDS

The protective system is more damaged and it is easier for germs to enter the body and cause various illnesses.

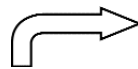
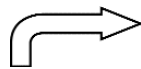


## 3. LATE AIDS

The protective system is severely damaged and germs easily enter the body and cause various illnesses.

## STAGES OF HIV

**HIV destroys the body's protective system very slowly.  
From the time of infection to AIDS may be 2 to 10 years.**



### **Newly infected with HIV**

HIV negative  
'Window period'  
1-3 months  
Can transmit HIV

### **HIV+ without AIDS**

HIV+  
Healthy for 2-10 years  
No symptoms  
Can transmit HIV

### **Early AIDS**

HIV+  
Starts to get sick with  
various infections.  
Can transmit HIV

### **Late AIDS**

HIV+  
Body is very weak and  
easily gets infections.  
Can transmit HIV



## HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE HIV?

The only way to know if you have HIV is to test your blood.

If you have HIV you can still be healthy for several years. You can do your work.

**Early HIV infection does not have any visible symptoms.**



## WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HIV AND AIDS?

HIV is a virus.

AIDS means the illnesses that a person has when HIV has destroyed the body's protective system.

Eventually a person with HIV becomes ill with such diseases as persistent severe diarrhea, fever, tuberculosis, pneumonia, etc.

When an HIV+ person has these serious diseases we call it AIDS.

### **Do all people with AIDS have the same symptoms?**

No. The symptoms of AIDS vary from person to person depending on the diseases that enter the weakened body and the strength of the individual's protective system.



## EXTRA INFORMATION

The signs and symptoms of AIDS come from the diseases that enter the weakened body. These diseases are called opportunistic infections (OIs) because they seize the opportunity to enter the body when it is weak. Some diseases such as skin and mouth infections are common and affect many people with AIDS.

Living with AIDS is like living with other chronic diseases. Sometimes the person feels sick and other times he or she feels fine. It takes the HIV virus a long time to weaken the body.

# HOW IS HIV TRANSMITTED?



HIV virus can be transmitted in 3 ways:

**1. By sexual fluids (semen in men, vaginal secretion in women) through sexual contact**

- Vaginal sex
- Anal sex
- Oral sex

Having sexual intercourse without using a condom, with someone who is infected with HIV, puts you at risk of HIV infection.

**2. By HIV infected blood**

HIV can live in blood. If HIV infected blood enters your body you could be infected.

Infected blood can enter your body through a blood transfusion or a small amount of blood on a used needle and syringe.



**3. By HIV transmission to infants**

Some babies born to mothers who are HIV+ will become HIV+.



## **EXTRA INFORMATION**

**If I am exposed to HIV, is it certain that I will be infected?**

No, sometimes the partners of HIV+ people are not infected with HIV.  
The only way you can know if you are HIV+ is by testing your blood.

## HOW IS HIV NOT TRANSMITTED?

HIV is not transmitted by the following:

- \* Caring for a person who is sick with AIDS
- \* Living with an HIV+ person
- \* Touching body fluids such as sweat, saliva, vomit, faeces or urine



\* Sharing meals and eating utensils

\* Using the same toilet

\* Working with an HIV+ person

\* Hugging and touching an HIV+ person



\* Studying in the same class as an HIV+ person

\* Through mosquito or insect bites

\* Eating food prepared by an HIV+ person





## WHAT IS THE HIV TEST ?

The HIV test is a special blood test that tells if HIV is in your body.

### What are the benefits of having a blood test for HIV?

If the test shows that you are HIV negative you can:

- \* Learn how to protect yourself from future HIV infection
- \* Feel relieved

If your test shows that HIV is in you body you can:

- \* Learn about HIV and how to take good care of yourself
- \* Plan carefully for the future of yourself and your family
- \* Share your problems and discuss solutions with other HIV+ people
- \* Take extra care of your health to protect against other infections

## SHOULD I GET TESTED?

If you are worried about HIV/AIDS you should talk to an experienced counselor and decide if you want to test for HIV.

**Risky behavior includes:**

- \* Having sex without a condom, with a partner who might have other partners.
- \* Contact with the blood of an HIV infected person if you have an open wound or cut on your skin.
- \* Using a needle and/or syringe that has not been sterilized or sharing a syringe with other people.



**Find a reliable place that follows government guidelines for testing.**

### Where can I get an HIV test?

There are many places offering testing services in Cambodia. An appropriate place provides pre- and post-test counseling.

## EXTRA INFORMATION

Private laboratories or clinics may or may not follow government guidelines.

If you are thinking about going for testing, consider which of your family members or friends would be a good person to talk to when you receive the results.

Some people choose to test before getting married. It is important to choose a place that follows government guidelines, so you can be sure you get accurate results.

## HOW DO I RECOGNIZE A GOOD COUNSELING AND TESTING SERVICE?

**The signs of a good testing service are:**



- \* A counselor will discuss the test with you before you have it and also after you receive the test results.
- \* If the result is positive, a specially trained counselor will help you cope.
- \* If the result is negative, a specially trained counselor will help you know how to protect yourself in the future.

**Staff at the counseling and testing service must not tell anyone else about your results.**



### **EXTRA INFORMATION**

Your blood will be tested with a second different test if the first test gives an HIV+ result.  
One test is not enough to confirm an HIV+ result.

## WHAT DO I DO IF I AM HIV NEGATIVE?

1. The HIV test does not show HIV in the blood until three months after a person has been infected. So if your test is negative, you may have the virus but it does not show in your blood. Therefore, have another test in 3 months. The most important thing is to use a condom to protect yourself during the 3 month period.
2. Always use a condom for sex unless you are sure that you and your partner are HIV negative.
3. Do not use a needle and/or syringe that has been used by another person.



**Tell your friends about your experience at the good testing center.**

**Your friends can choose to test if they are worried about being HIV+.**

## WHAT DO I DO IF I AM HIV+?

1. Learn about the disease and how to care for yourself. (See Book Two in the Self Care Series)
2. Talk with others who are also HIV+. In some areas, people living with HIV have formed support groups. Ask if a support group exists in your community.
3. Plan your future and take care of your health. (See Book Two in the Self Care Series)



**Discuss HIV/AIDS with a family member or friend who loves and cares about you.**

## **EXTRA INFORMATION**

You might be shocked if the test shows you are HIV+. You may be worried when you think about the future. Your feelings of sadness and anger will come and go.

## WHO SHOULD I TELL THAT I HAVE HIV?



You must decide who to tell. It is very important, however, to tell those you have put at risk through unprotected sexual contact. Someone else, such as a counselor or HIV care provider or a trusted friend, may help you find a way to tell your sexual partner.

### **There are two reasons why you may want to tell people that you have HIV:**

1. If you have a sexual partner she/he may also be infected.
2. You may feel great relief when you tell others that you are HIV+. Often family and friends give you more help than you expected.

## **EXTRA INFORMATION**

HIV/AIDS is not a shameful disease. It is a serious infectious disease that can be prevented. When HIV occurs, families and communities need to come together to help each other.



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**Content: Pratin Dharmarak, Donna Flanagan, Mary Dunbar**

**Art work by**  
**- Mr. Rint Hoeuth (Drawing Artist)**  
**- Mr. Tara Lim for the Design and Layout**

