10 Facts About HIV / AIDS

1. Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) causes AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) by slowly destroying the body’s immune system, leaving the individual open to illnesses that healthy people normally resist.

2. HIV is spread in only three ways: 1) intimate sexual contact involving the exchange of blood, semen, or vaginal fluid; 2) blood to blood contact between an infected individual and a non-infected individual; and 3) from an infected mother prenatally or after birth through breast milk.

3. HIV is NOT spread by: a) casual contact such as crying, coughing, sneezing, or hugging; b) by sharing food, towels and bathroom facilities of people with HIV/AIDS; c) by using pools, hot tubs, or saunas; or d) insect bites.

4. The time between becoming infected with HIV and the onset of AIDS symptoms range from several months to 10-15 years or more.

5. Unfortunately, not everyone is completely honest about past sexual experiences and/or they may not be aware of any present infection. As a result, talking to a partner about their sexual history may not be a reliable method to preventing HIV and other STIs.

6. Sexual transmission of HIV/AIDS and other STIs is best prevented by practicing abstinence (no genital or anal contact) or by practing “safer sex.” Safer sex includes: 1) using latex or polyurethane condoms or a latex dam (a rectangular piece of thin latex to provide a physical barrier for oral/genital or oral/anal contact) during every sexual contact; and/or 2) experiencing sexual intimacy without intercourse and without exchange of blood or sexual fluids (semen & vaginal fluids).

7. The AIDS epidemic is global. Estimates are that 36.9 million people were living with HIV, 2.0 million new infections, & 1.2 million AIDS deaths in 2014.

8. The Centers for Disease Control estimates that 1.2 million people in the U.S. were living with HIV at the end of 2012 and 12.8% do not know it. It is important to get tested.

9. DeKalb County has a low rate of HIV & AIDS cases with 40 cases of HIV and 15 cases of AIDS between 2006 and 2013.

10. HIV testing is safe and effective, and testing does not increase your risk of contracting HIV. Confidential testing is available at NIU Health Services. Some county health departments and clinics in Chicago and Rockford offer anonymous testing.

For more information on AIDS, HIV, STIs (Sexually Transmitted Infections), safer sex and condoms, or to obtain condoms, contact Wellness Promotion 815-753-9755

For an appointment for HIV testing call 815-753-9759 (Health Services) or contact your health care provider.

(1) Information gathered from UNAIDS; Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS 2014
(2) www.cdc.gov/hiv/statistics/basics.html