

# AIDS

Think before  
you give blood



THE NATIONAL BLOOD TRANSFUSION SERVICE

AIDS is caused by a virus that lives in blood. You can get AIDS by having sex with someone who has the AIDS virus in their blood. You can also get AIDS if blood containing the virus enters your bloodstream. Most people who have been infected do not know that they carry the virus, because they may feel and look completely well. But they can pass the virus on.

### Blood tests

Before you give blood, a quick test shows if you have anaemia. Other tests are done in the laboratory after you give blood. These include a test for antibodies to the AIDS virus, to which donors are asked to agree. But the test may not show up early stages of infection. That is why people who may have been exposed to the virus must not go to donor sessions, even if they get a call-up card. The Blood Transfusion Service will not ask people why they do not go.

### If a test is positive

In the unlikely event of a positive reaction to any of the laboratory tests, a donor is informed by a doctor from the blood transfusion centre, so that extra tests can be made. A donor's medical record is always kept in the strictest confidence.

People who think they may have been exposed to the AIDS virus can get a blood test in strict confidence, either through their own doctor, a sexually transmitted diseases clinic or at a genito-urinary medicine clinic. Clinics can be found in the phone book under 'venereal diseases' or 'sexually transmitted diseases'. People who think they may have been exposed to the AIDS virus should still not give blood even if their test is negative.

### These people must not give blood:

- ✗ Men and women who know they are infected with the AIDS virus or who have AIDS.
- ✗ Men who have had sex with another man at any time since 1977.
- ✗ Men and women who have injected themselves with drugs at any time since 1977.
- ✗ Men and women who have had sex at any time since 1977 with men or women living in African countries, except those on the Mediterranean.
- ✗ Men and women who have had sex with anyone in these groups. Sexual partners of haemophiliacs.
- ✗ Men and women who are prostitutes.

## **You cannot get AIDS by giving blood**

All the materials used for collecting blood are sterile and used only once. Neither AIDS nor any other disease can be caught from giving blood.

Anyone can discuss in confidence the information in this leaflet:

- with a doctor at the blood collection session
- with their own doctor
- with a doctor from their blood transfusion centre
- at any sexually transmitted diseases clinic.

NBTS 1181

Prepared by the Department of Health and Social Security and the Central Office of Information for the National Blood Transfusion Service, July 87.  
Printed in the UK for HMSO Dd8939589 J0387NE (HSSH) 800M July 87