



**The Norman Knight Nursing Center
for Clinical & Professional Development**

PCAs Quick Reference:

What is HIV?

HIV is the virus that causes HIV infection.

HIV attacks and destroys the infection fighting CD4 cells of the immune system. The loss of CD4 cells makes it difficult for the body to fight infections and certain cancers. Without treatment, HIV can gradually destroy the immune system and advance to AIDS, which is the most advanced stage of HIV infection.

Antiretroviral therapy (ART) is the use of HIV medicines to treat HIV infection. ART cannot cure HIV, but HIV medicines help people with HIV live longer, healthier lives. These medicines can also reduce the risk of HIV transmission.

HIV is spread through contact with the blood, semen, pre-seminal fluid, rectal fluids, vaginal fluids or breast milk of a person with HIV.

You cannot get HIV by shaking hands or hugging a person who has HIV. You cannot get HIV from contact with objects such as dishes, toilet seats or doorknobs used by a person with HIV. HIV is not spread through the air or water or by mosquitoes or ticks.

What do you need to know? Prevention Strategies

- Occupational transmission of HIV to healthcare workers is extremely rare.
- Assume that blood and other body fluids from all patients are potentially infectious
- Routinely use barriers (such as gloves, goggles) when anticipating contact with blood or body fluids
- Immediately wash hands and other skin surfaces after contact with blood or body fluids
- Carefully handle and dispose of sharp instruments (including needles) during and after use
- Place all sharps in sharp containers
- Report any exposures (such as a needle stick) immediately and complete a safety report

What is the role of the PCA (under the direction of the RN) ?

Be safe! Use standard precautions (gloves, gown, mask, eye protection) for any activities that put you at risk for exposure to blood and body fluids.

Be sure to contact Occupational Health Services immediately after any exposure at 617-726-2217 or pager #2-1272.

Information is from the CDC, NIH and AIDS info websites.

