

AIDS

The Free Clinic works with the San Francisco Public Health Department. We are an official AIDS Screening site. Please feel free to ask any clinician your questions regarding AIDS. Dr. Tim Mess, our staff physician, also works as a staff physician at the AIDS Clinic at San Francisco General Hospital. He is also available for you to talk with.

THE SYMPTOMS OF AIDS

Many of the symptoms associated with AIDS are similar to those found with colds, bronchitis and stomach flu. The important difference that characterizes many AIDS symptoms is their duration, disappearance, recurrence and their severity.

According to Bay Area Physicians for Human Rights, the general symptoms of AIDS include:

- Unexplained increasing and persistent fatigue.
- Periodic or regular fevers, shaking chills, drenching night sweats not accompanied by a known illness and lasting longer than several weeks.
- Weight loss that is unexpected and greater than approximately 10 lbs. in less than two months.
- Otherwise unexplained swollen glands (enlarged lymph nodes with or without pain, usually in the neck, armpits or groin) lasting for more than two weeks.
- Pink to purple flat or raised blotches or bumps, usually painless, occurring on or under the skin, inside the mouth, nose, eyelids or rectum. Initially they may look like bruises that do not go away and they usually are harder than the skin around them.
- Persistent white spots or unusual blemishes in the mouth.
- Persistent diarrhea.
- Persistent or frequent dry cough that is not from smoking and has lasted too long to be from a usual respiratory infection.
- Shortness of breath or difficulty in breathing while walking, which is recent and getting worse.

Because medical data suggests that AIDS has an "incubation period" of 7 to 24 months—**AIDS becomes everybody's problem!** No matter how healthy you feel, you need to take care of yourself and those with whom you care enough about to be sexual. As with other sexually transmitted contagious diseases (gonorrhea, syphilis, herpes, hepatitis B) many people may have contracted AIDS but have no symptoms, and during the incubation period, may be spreading it without their knowledge.

THE AIDS HEALTH PROJECT

As part of a comprehensive prevention effort, the AIDS Health Project was developed from funds through the San Francisco Department of Public Health. Designed in collaboration with behavioral scientists at UCSE, the project is based on the premise that good physical and emotional health is good for a person's immune system. The more a person does to improve his or her health, the better the immune system can fight off AIDS.

The Project is staffed by highly trained and experienced professionals skilled in the area of health, including AIDS prevention. These professionals help high risk individuals to identify specific ways to improve their health and to help them make the changes needed to improve their health. The project offers individual consultations and ongoing workshops on stress management, safe sex practices, health enhancement, and preventing depression. These workshops are based on the latest information on AIDS prevention and health promotion and are tailored to the needs of interested persons who are at risk.

A staff member of the AIDS Health Project is available to clients of the Haight-Ashbury Free Clinic and other interested persons. Services are free. Make an appointment at the front desk, or leave a message if you'd like someone to call you.