

Introduction to HIV

Grade 5-6, Lesson #14

Time Needed

45 minutes

Student Learning Objectives

To be able to...

1. Understand how communicable diseases are transmitted.
2. Define human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).
3. Recognize that HIV is not easily transmitted like other common communicable diseases.
4. Identify methods of transmission and prevention of HIV.
5. State that people with HIV should be treated like everyone else, with kindness and respect.

Agenda

1. Introduce topic of communicable disease through discussion of common cold.
2. Introduce topic of HIV.
3. Show and discuss video.
4. Play sorting game about HIV transmission.

This lesson was most recently edited November 2021.

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Materials Needed

Classroom Materials:

“HIV and Me: Marissa’s Story”
5th Grade Redefine Positive Video
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S2J7bH1JQ40>

Student Materials:

- Category Cards, 1 set per small group
- Behavior Cards, 1 set per small group

Teacher Preparation

Prepare to show video, “HIV and Me: Marissa’s Story”

FLASH Key Concepts

HIV is a serious illness that doesn’t have a cure. People who have HIV can live a long, healthy life with the help of a doctor.

People can prevent getting HIV and giving HIV to other people.

Kids your age almost never catch HIV.

It is important to treat everyone with caring and respect, including people who have HIV and other STDs.

Activities

1. Introduce the topic of communicable diseases.

Everyone catches a cold some time or other, and it doesn't feel very good. Try to think of a time someone you know had a cold. What were their symptoms? (Stuffy nose, sneezing, coughing, headache, etc.) What can people do to help prevent getting a cold or giving it to someone else? (Wash hands often, sneeze into elbow, use tissue, etc.).

A cold is a very common communicable disease (write communicable disease on the board.) A communicable disease is an illness that spreads from one person to another. Different communicable diseases spread in different ways. The germ that causes a cold, for example, spreads easily onto objects that other people might touch, and it spreads into the air when someone sneezes or coughs. There are lots of things people do to prevent giving and getting different communicable diseases. You just gave some great examples, like washing hands and sneezing into a tissue or elbow.

What other communicable diseases can you think of – other illnesses that spread from person to person? (Covid-19, flu, lice, measles, athlete's foot, strep throat, etc.) If needed, point out that many illnesses are not communicable, that is, a person can't get them from someone else, such as allergies, asthma, diabetes, stroke and lots of others.

Most communicable diseases are cured with medicine or go away on their own, and some can be prevented in the first place with a vaccine.

2. Introduce HIV.

Today we're going to learn about a communicable disease called HIV. Some of you may have learned about HIV before, and for some of you, this will be a new topic. Once a person has HIV, it doesn't go away. There isn't yet medicine to cure HIV or a vaccine to prevent it, but there is effective medicine to help prevent it and treat it. Fortunately, kids your age almost never catch HIV.

We're going to watch a video to learn more about HIV, and then we'll discuss it. It's a true story with real people.

3. Show and discuss video: "HIV and Me: Marissa's Story" (9:30).

Lead class discussion of video:

- *Just to review, which person in the video has HIV?*
Marissa's mom
- *How did Marissa feel at the beginning of the video? Why?*
She felt scared because she didn't know much about HIV.

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- *What did Marissa learn from her mom's doctor that made her feel better?*
Marissa learned she doesn't have to worry about getting HIV from her mom. HIV doesn't spread from touching, hugging, kissing, food, sharing a bathroom, etc. Marissa also learned that medicine can help her mom live a long and healthy life.
- *How does having HIV make someone sick?*
HIV makes it hard for the body to fight off germs and illnesses. The immune system in our bodies is what keeps us healthy, but HIV makes the immune system very weak.
- *Now that you've seen the video, why do you think HIV is called a communicable disease?*
Because it spreads from person to person.
- *What did the video say about how a person gets HIV?*
A person can get HIV by having sex with someone who has HIV and by sharing needles for drug use with someone who has HIV. A baby can also get it from breastfeeding or being born from a person with HIV.
- *The video listed different ways a person can protect themselves from getting HIV. What were they?*
(1) Not having sex, (2) Not sharing needles for illegal drugs, (3) Pregnant person taking medicine so HIV doesn't spread to fetus. (You can add the following information that wasn't in the video. Other ways to prevent the spread of HIV are to use a condom during sex, which is like a thin stretchy glove for the penis, and to take medicine that makes it harder to give or get HIV.)
- *If we were to meet Marissa's mom, how do you think we should treat her?*
Like we would treat any other person. It's important to treat everyone with caring and respect, including people with HIV.

4. Lead small group activity with HIV transmission and prevention cards.

Next we're going to play a cooperative game to review how HIV can be transmitted and how it can be prevented.

Divide the class into small groups. Give each small group one set of category cards ("you CAN get HIV" and "you CAN'T get HIV") and one set of behavior cards. Each small group will work together to place the behavior cards under the correct category card. As an example, write the two categories on the board and ask the class where "kissing" belongs (it goes under "you CAN'T get HIV").

If the groups are uncertain about the placement of a particular behavior, they can set the card to the side or make their best guess. When the small group task has been completed, ask volunteers for their answer, and write the behaviors under the correct category on the board.

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A person CAN get HIV

- Sharing needles for drug use with someone who has HIV.
- Having sex with someone who has HIV.
- When the person giving birth to them has HIV.
- When the person breastfeeding them has HIV.

A person CAN'T get HIV

- Sitting on public toilet seats.
- Kissing someone who has HIV.
- Hugging someone who has HIV.
- Sharing food with someone who has HIV.
- When a mosquito bites them right after it bites someone with HIV.

“A person CAN get HIV” debrief points:

Sharing needles for drug use with someone who has HIV

If a person with HIV injects illegal drugs into their body with a needle, there is some blood left inside the needle afterward. If another person uses the same needle, they are injecting blood with HIV into their own body. This is one way HIV is spread from person to person.

Having sex with someone who has HIV

If a person has sex with someone who has HIV, they can get HIV. (Wearing a condom on the penis would protect them. A condom is like a stretchy glove for the penis.)

When the person giving birth to them has HIV

HIV can be passed to the developing fetus in the uterus, or to the baby during birth as it passes through the vagina, but this rarely happens in the United States. If a pregnant person with HIV takes HIV medications, there is less than 1% chance that the baby will get HIV.

When the person breastfeeding them has HIV

A baby can get HIV if it drinks breast milk from someone who has HIV. Breast milk contains HIV, and it enters the baby's body through the soft tissue in their mouth.

“A person CAN'T get HIV” debrief points:

Sitting on public toilet seats

A person cannot get HIV from sitting on toilet seats. (Only if students ask: Even if someone sat on body fluids that spread HIV, the skin would protect them from getting HIV.)

Kissing someone who has HIV

HIV is not spread from one person to another through kissing because saliva does not contain HIV. (Only if students ask: If someone had a little cut in their mouth when they were kissing, they still could not spread HIV through kissing because there would not be enough blood to transmit HIV. The only way HIV could be passed this way would be very unlikely: if the person with HIV had a lot of sores in their mouth, and the other person had a lot of sores and cuts in their gums.)

Hugging someone who has HIV

There is no way to get HIV from hugging. HIV does not spread from skin to skin.

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Sharing food with someone who has HIV

HIV does not spread between people from food.

When a mosquito bites them right after it bites someone with HIV

Although this may seem similar to sharing a needle, it is not. HIV does not live inside mosquitos, even if the mosquito bites someone who has HIV. Many serious illnesses spread from mosquitos, but HIV is not one of them.

If students bring up questions or concerns about ear piercing or blood brothers/sisters, tell them that even though other diseases are spread this way, no kids have gotten HIV from these things.

5. Close the lesson

Great work everyone! I think we all learned a lot about HIV today. Even though kids your age almost never get HIV, it's still important for us to discuss. I want to make sure you all know how to keep yourselves healthy when you get older.

Homework

Students' options:

- Family homework: What do you wish you had learned about HIV when you were younger?
- Individual homework: What are 2 of the most important things you learned about HIV today?

**A person CAN
get HIV**

**A person CAN'T
get HIV**

Sharing needles for drug use
with someone who has HIV

Sitting on public
toilet seats

Kissing someone
who has HIV

Having sex with someone
who has HIV

When the person giving birth
to them has HIV

Sharing food with someone
who has HIV

When the person breast
feeding them has HIV

Hugging someone
who has HIV

When a mosquito bites them
right after it bites
someone with HIV