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# Note From Author

## Jeanne Blake

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Dear Visitor to Wordscanwork.com,

*Risky Times: How to be AIDS-Smart and Stay Healthy*, was published by Workman Publishing in 1990. Below you can read Chapter Three and a portion of Chapter Four of the book.

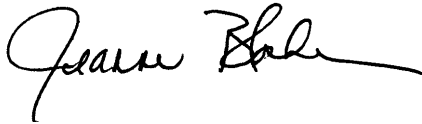
More than 225, 000 copies of *Risky Times* were printed in English, Spanish and Japanese. The book was last updated in 1993. Workman Publishing is no longer printing the book, but it's available from online retailers.

Much of the information in these chapters is still fact. Thankfully, tremendous strides have been made in the last three decades in AIDS research, so updates would be necessary for the text below to be considered scientifically accurate.

Two reliable online resources for up-to date-information about HIV/AIDS are [www.thebody.com](http://www.thebody.com) and [www.cdc.gov/hiv/](http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/) (*English and Spanish*)

If you'd be interested in an updated version of *Risky Times: How to be AIDS-Smart and Stay Healthy*, let us know at [info@wordscanwork.com](mailto:info@wordscanwork.com). We'll tell our friends at Workman Publishing.

Thank you.



Jeanne Blake

Author, *Risky Times: How to be AIDS-Smart and Stay Healthy*

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# How You Can And Can't Get Infected

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Hundreds of thousands of infected people have learned that HIV, the AIDS virus, doesn't care whom it infects. It does not discriminate. It is passed from person to person. Outside the body the virus is weak; inside the body it is strong. The virus will live in anyone who gives it a chance by exposing himself or herself to it. The AIDS virus is found in blood, in the fluids in the vagina, in semen, and in the fluids that leak from a man's penis before an orgasm.

## HOW AIDS IS SPREAD

**Vaginal sex:** When a man puts his penis into a woman's vagina, it's called vaginal sex. It's the most common kind of sex between men and women. If the man is infected with the AIDS virus, the fluids from his penis can get into the woman's bloodstream through a tear in the vagina that may be so small it can't be felt or seen.

Or it may be possible for the AIDS virus to get into the blood through certain cells lining the vagina. Though the first cases of AIDS in this country were reported among gay men, nearly 12% of all AIDS cases in the United States are now among women. In parts of Africa, there are more cases of AIDS among women than among men. Experts state that the number of women with AIDS in the United States will continue to increase.

**Anal sex:** When a man puts his penis into his sex partner's anus it's called anal sex. The skin of the rectum is especially tender and can easily tear during anal sex. When this happens, the fluids from his penis may get through the skin of the rectum and into the bloodstream. Some doctors say it is also possible for the virus to infect certain cells directly in the lining of the rectum. So even if the skin doesn't tear, infection with the virus can occur. Infection can pass the other way, too: the rectum can bleed if irritated by the penis, letting infected blood into the body through the penis. Whether you are a man or a woman, anal intercourse is risky.

**Oral sex:** Contact between a person's genitals and a sex partner's mouth is oral sex. Virus in the fluids of the penis or the vagina can get into the body through cuts or openings in the mouth. Scientists do not know whether HIV can enter your bloodstream through your digestive tract if swallowed.

**Kissing:** The AIDS virus has been found in small amounts in the saliva of some people, but researchers have never found AIDS to be spread by kissing. Scientists say there just isn't enough virus in saliva to cause infection. Experts believe that if an infected person, with even a small open cut in his mouth, kisses someone who also has a cut in

*"If we know the facts we can keep ourselves out of the range of AIDS. We can be AIDS-free and worry-free."*

PJ



the mouth, the virus could be passed in infected blood. But most scientists agree you can enjoy kissing without worrying about AIDS transmission.

*"It's hard enough to get straight information about sex and drugs. But AIDS is an avoided issue altogether, even though it's real serious. Look what it's doing. It's real dramatic. If you don't know anyone with it, you don't realize what AIDS can do. If you have the facts you will know what AIDS is and how to avoid it."*

**Aaron**



**Shooting drugs intravenously (into your veins):** When people inject drugs, they also draw their blood into the needle and syringe (the hollow cartridge that holds the needle). If other people use that needle and syringe without first cleaning it, they can be exposed to the blood in the needle and syringe. If the blood contains HIV, then the virus will also be injected when the next person shoots up. It is likely that infection will occur.

**Tattoos, ear piercing, and shooting steroids:** If you share a needle with another person for any of these activities, you are risking possible infection the AIDS virus because the needle you share could be contaminated with infected blood. If you get a tattoo or pierced ears by a professional who uses a sterile needle for each customer, there is no risk of infection with HIV, the AIDS virus.

If you shoot steroids with a sterile needle, there is no threat of infection with the AIDS virus, though oral or injected steroids pose many other serious health risks. Steroids are dangerous drugs. If you use them to make yourself stronger or faster for competitive sports, or to look better, you're definitely risking your life.

**Transfusions:** When you receive blood because of an accident or illness, it is called a transfusion. Because HIV is found in blood, a transfusion of an infected person's blood into your body is another way the AIDS virus can be spread. All blood in the United States is now tested for the [presence of the] AIDS virus *before* it is even given to another person, but this was not always the case. Before the test was available,

thousands of people were infected with the virus through blood products. The test has made blood products safer but there is still a small risk of infection because no test is 100% accurate. Also, some people may donate blood so soon after they have become infected that signs of the infection may not show up on the test.

Anyone planning to have surgery that might require a blood transfusion should consider autologous donation, which is a process by which you donate and store your own blood over a 4- to 6-week period before surgery. This is primarily recommended to avoid infection with the hepatitis virus, but it will also help avoid infection with HIV. Many hospitals now offer this option to patients. You may get more information from your doctor's office, health center, or clinic.

**Hemophilia:** Hemophiliacs are people who lack a clotting substance in their blood. They can control their disorder through frequent infusions of a clotting factor, called anti-hemophilic factor (AHF). AHF is made by pooling thousands of units of blood plasma, which is the clear liquid portion of the blood.

Before blood testing for the presence of HIV, the AIDS virus, began in 1985, thousands of hemophiliacs became infected by receiving AHF contaminated with the AIDS virus. AHF, which had proved to be a lifesaver for hemophiliacs, became a potential killer.

Across the country between 45% and 50% of all hemophiliacs -- about 20,000 people -- are infected with HIV as a result of treatment for their disorder.

**Accidental exposure to blood or body fluids:** A small number of doctors, researchers, nurses, and other health-care workers have been infected with the AIDS virus by caring for people or by working with infected blood products. In each case, they were either splashed with large amounts of infected blood or stuck by needles while drawing blood from an infected person. Although these accidents are not rare, they usually don't result in infection.

*"It doesn't matter if you are healthy or not, male or female -- anyone can get AIDS."*

**Barbara**



**Transmission from a pregnant woman to her unborn child:** If a woman is infected with HIV, studies have suggested that there is some chance the virus will be passed on to her unborn child. Researchers found that the drug AZT, given to the mother before delivery and to babies shortly after birth, can lower the chances of infection from 25% to less than 10%. For complex biological reasons, some babies are born with just the mother's antibodies to HIV, not the virus itself. In those babies, after about one year, the antibodies will disappear. Until then, evidence of antibodies will show up on tests, and will appear that the baby has been infected with HIV. There are also reports of babies being infected while breastfeeding.

*"It's obvious why people should know about AIDS. If you know about AIDS you can make decisions based on the consequences of your spontaneous behavior."*

**Tanya**





# A Family Fights to Stay Well

Carolyn looks remarkably healthy. Her skin is reddened from an afternoon at the beach. Her teeth are white and straight. She is strong and confident as she poses for a photograph in the office of the AIDS Action Committee of Boston. Carolyn and about 50 other people infected with the AIDS virus have just finished their weekly dinner meeting. It's their chance to get together and talk. Carolyn's friends here refer to her as "the gorgeous one."

In high school, Carolyn had "tons of friends." They understood that she had little time to party. She was a disciplined dancer. Jazz and tap-dancing lessons after school and ballet every Saturday absorbed most of her time. And there was Karl. Karl was Carolyn's love. She met and started dating Karl when she was 13. "He was totally wild and crazy. He was the kind of guy who would think nothing of walking down the grocery store aisle and suddenly starting to dance. He was so spontaneous. I loved him a lot."

Carolyn and Karl were together six years. They shared everything. At least Carolyn thought so. But Karl had a secret. He was bisexual. One day Karl became violently ill and had to be hospitalized. A month later, he was dead.

"He had been sick through the whole summer. He was tired and cranky and had lost a lot of weight. He just wasn't himself at all. When he went into the hospital, he was diagnosed with AIDS. And then everything happened so fast."

Carolyn knew there was a good chance she had become infected during sexual intercourse with Karl. So she got tested and found out she was infected.

"I didn't want to deal with it. It took a while before I could accept my diagnosis. I was in total shock; I was devastated. I have heard young people say you can tell when someone has AIDS, but I know you can't – not even if it's someone you have been with for a long time. There could be skeletons in the closet they won't want to tell you about."

Carolyn was afraid she would never fall in love again. At a time when she needed support, some of her closest friends would have nothing to do with her.

"I took a week off from my job for Karl's funeral, and the morning I was supposed to go back, they called and said they didn't need me anymore. People with AIDS deserve to be treated with respect. You can't get AIDS by touching

*"The fact of the matter is it can happen to you. You have to be smart enough to admit AIDS is a real danger, a possibility no matter how remote, a risk that is not worth taking. No matter how you try to rationalize it away, it can happen."*

**Ben**



me or hugging me or talking to me. One of the worst things is to be so young and find out you have a life-threatening disease and be rejected by people because of it.”



But Carolyn was not alone for long. Roy, an old boyfriend, came back into her life. He was stable and secure, just what Carolyn wanted. They dated, fell in love again, and got married. When they made love, Carolyn asked Roy to use condoms to protect himself from infection. He didn't think it was necessary. He was wrong. He did get infected.

“A lot of people think AIDS is just a gay people's disease, and it's not. It happened to me. I slept with a woman, not a man. Everyone should use protection. You can't take a chance because you just don't know.”

Roy and Carolyn are fighting to stay well. They eat healthfully and try to reduce the stress in their lives through meditation. Some days Carolyn is so tired, she struggles to stay awake until Roy comes home from work at five o'clock. Even when she doesn't feel well, she reminds herself that life is precious.

“Living with AIDS is learning to live. I have to learn to enjoy each day and make the best out of it because I don't know what is down the road for me.”

Carolyn has another reason to fight so hard to live. She and Karl had a baby. He is young and needs his mommy. He was born to Carolyn before she realized she was infected with the AIDS virus. He, too, is infected with the AIDS virus. Once people are infected, they remain infected forever. And they are capable of infecting others, as the story of Carolyn and Roy proves.

*Carolyn died after developing pneumocystis pneumonia.*



# No Peace at Home

Alin has bright outlook on life. And when you think about all he's been through, that's amazing. As a youngster, Alin was constantly hassled by other kids. Neighborhood bullies made fun of him because he had a black mother and a white father.

"Life was pretty tough. I wasn't considered black and I wasn't considered white. I kept getting beat up and having things taken from me – books, money."

Alin found little peace at home. He never knew his real father. His stepfather drank and then beat up him and his mother. Alin tried to defend them but he wasn't big or strong enough. After years of abuse, at the age of 18, Alin left home. He earned money working as a bartender and moving furniture. Alin made lots of friends and his social life picked up. But as winter came, Alin got sick. An infection festered in his throat and stomach. His doctor treated the illness and tested Alin for presence of HIV, the AIDS virus. He had heard about AIDS a couple of years ago and had started practicing safer sex, but by then he was already infected.

Alin figures sexually active young adults, by the choices they make, have a chance to live infection-free.

"If you want to say no, say no! But if you are going to have sex, use a condom. AIDS is too much of a risk to take. You could say, 'This one time it's not going to happen.' Well that's gambling. It could boil down to that one time because that's all it takes to get infected."

*"It's important that kids and grownups not be afraid of AIDS and that they know how to protect themselves from it and cope with it. If we know about AIDS, we will be able to interact with people who have AIDS and try to help them, not exclude them."*

**Alexei**

