

HIV & SPORT: MYTHS VS TRUTHS

pridein
sport

HIV is very different today compared to previous decades. Highly effective treatments mean that people now living with HIV can live healthy and active lifestyles including playing sport. HIV is now a manageable health condition.

By understanding what living with HIV looks like today, we can reduce any anxieties we may have around HIV in sport and better support our team mates who may be living with HIV.

With current HIV treatments, many people living with HIV are unable to transmit HIV and will never develop AIDS.

MYTHS AROUND HIV IN SPORT

HIV and AIDS are not the same

HIV

HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is a virus that weakens the immune system, which is the body's defence against disease and infections.

AIDS

If HIV is left untreated, it can lead to AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome), where a person's immune system is weakened to a critical point, making them prone to infections and cancers.

You CANNOT get HIV from



Sharing water bottles



Sharing uniforms, clothing or towels



Sharing showers or soap



Body contact (including handshakes and tackles)



Kissing, spit or saliva



Sweat or perspiration

“ I AM LIVING WITH HIV; NOW YOU HAVE THAT INFORMATION THAT MAKES ME EXTREMELY VULNERABLE, BUT DOES NOT MAKE ME WEAK. I CHOOSE TO FIGHT TO EDUCATE AND BREAK THE STIGMA AROUND THIS SUBJECT. ”

Gareth Thomas, Professional Rugby Player, 2019

HERE ARE THE TRUTHS AROUND HIV

Treatment

Highly effective treatment options for people living with HIV have come a long way.

- People living with HIV on treatment can suppress the level of HIV in their bodies to such a low level, we call it ‘undetectable’.
- Most people living with HIV are on effective treatment and are sustaining an undetectable viral load.
- People living with HIV with an undetectable viral load cannot transmit HIV to a HIV negative person.
- People living with HIV on treatment experience better health outcomes and can safely enjoy participating in sport.

How is HIV transmitted?

Unlike the common cold, HIV is difficult to transmit from one person to another. In Australia, the most common way HIV is transmitted is through unprotected sex.

The chances of transmitting HIV on the sporting field is extremely unlikely. In fact, there has never been a recorded case of HIV transmission through sport in Australia.

HIV Stigma

For people living with HIV, stigma can make them feel shame, embarrassment and isolation. HIV stigma comes about through a combined lack of understanding around HIV, as well as fear and judgement towards people living with HIV. By educating ourselves about HIV, we can reduce any fears and anxieties we may have around HIV, and better support those who are living with HIV.

Here are some things you can do to help eliminate HIV stigma:

- Equipping yourself with HIV knowledge
- Educating yourself on the myths around how HIV is transmitted and debunking them
- Understanding the changing landscape of HIV and experiences of people living with HIV
- Thinking about the words you choose when talking about HIV

For more information on equality and inclusion in sport, visit Pride In Sport www.prideinsport.com.au

For more information about HIV, call ACON on (02) 9206 2000 or visit www.acon.org.au

