



**Filipinos** represent **one-third** of total Asian American and Pacific Islander AIDS cases in California, **nearly three times greater than any other AAPI group.** Compared to other Asian Americans, **Filipinos have the greatest number of deaths due to AIDS, with gay/bisexual men representing the highest number of cases within the Filipino community.**

**The silence and avoidance around the issue of HIV and AIDS in the Filipino community contributes to an increase in HIV infections.**

**What is HIV?**

HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is the virus that causes AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome). If you are infected, HIV gradually weakens your immune system so that your body is unable to protect itself against other diseases, such as pneumonia or even a common cold.

**What is AIDS?**

AIDS is the most severe stage of HIV infection and can take ten or more years to develop. AIDS breaks down your immune system leaving you vulnerable to many serious infections that take advantage of your body's weakened defenses and can cause death.

**How Is HIV Transmitted?**

Three factors must be present:

1. HIV must be present in certain body fluids such as blood, semen and vaginal fluids.
2. A sufficient quantity of HIV must exist in these fluids.
3. HIV must be introduced directly into the blood stream through unprotected sex or through cuts, tears, or punctures in the skin.

**Have You...**

- Had unprotected sex (i.e., sex without using a latex condom) with an HIV-positive partner or a person whose HIV status is unknown?
- Shared needles to inject drugs, steroids, vitamins, or get a tattoo or piercing?
- Had a sexually transmitted disease (STD)?
- Used alcohol or drugs before having sex (affecting your judgment so you're less likely to use condoms or use them correctly)?

If so, you may have put yourself at risk for getting HIV. It's not a matter of who you are, it's what you do that will make you vulnerable to HIV infection.

Some people have gotten HIV from blood transfusions or blood products. If you received a blood transfusion in the U.S. before 1985, you may be at risk. Blood transfusions received in another country in any year may still place you at risk.

*Anyone with HIV, whether they have symptoms or feel fine, can still transmit the virus to others.*

**How Is HIV Not Transmitted?**

It is important not to believe in the myths about transmission of HIV. For example, HIV cannot be transmitted through: eating utensils (chopsticks, forks, spoons, knives, etc.); toilet seats; insect bites; drinking fountains or swimming pools; saliva, tears or sweat; shaking hands or hugging; coughing and sneezing.

**Be educated on what's safe and what's not.**

**To fight this disease, we need to educate ourselves about the risks and how we can prevent HIV from spreading in our community.**