Dear Alice,

Can you get AIDS from a mosquito bite? I heard you can't, but I'm really paranoid about this. Actually, it wasn't a bite? I squashed the bug and all the blood in it splattered everywhere and then here I am with someone's blood on a cut in my finger. HELP! I'm really freaking out. I don't know if I should get tested or not again, because I did get tested before (negative), but the anguish of waiting for results was horrible. Maybe I'm just ultra paranoid?

?Bitten (or smitten?)

Alice,

Is it possible to contract AIDS by handling raw bloody meat?

?The butcher

Answer

Dear Bitten (or smitten?) and The butcher,

You are both in the clear? you can't get HIV/AIDS from a mosquito, nor can you get it from raw meat. Don't worry, you can handle as much raw meat as your job demands and you will never be at risk of getting HIV from the meat. Also, you can get bit by a swarm of mosquitoes without being at risk for contracting HIV, though you might be rather miserably itchy.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [2], mosquitoes do not inject blood when they bite. As a result, mosquitoes do not transmit the virus. What they do inject is an itch-inducing saliva that acts as a lubricant to aid blood extraction, but it does not carry the virus.

Even if the mosquito you squashed had just bitten an HIV infected person, the virus would stay alive within the mosquito's body for a short time. The fragility of HIV makes it impossible to be transmitted through inanimate objects, casual contact, or insects. Since it does not mutate the cells within insects or animals as it does in humans, testing for a vaccine/treatment for HIV has been more difficult than with other diseases where clinical trials have been performed on animals first before humans.

Mosquito bites do not transmit the virus in the same way that needle pricks do. Syringes are
dangerous because they allow virus-infected blood to survive in a shielded, airtight environment. Mosquitoes, on the other hand, carry only a tiny amount of residual blood on the outside of their mouths after a bite. That blood is exposed to the virus-unfriendly outside air. Furthermore, the concentration of HIV present in infected blood can be very low. Even after an infected bite, the blood on the bug's mouth might not contain the virus at all. In any case, stop worrying about this one. You can rest easy now, Bitten not Smitten.

The human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), the virus that causes AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome) is unique to humans and it can only be passed among people. Animals or animal products (dead or alive) cannot transmit HIV to humans or vice versa. Since raw bloody animal meat does not carry the virus, handling this meat will not be a risk. There also have been no documented cases of HIV being transmitted through food preparation or food serving.

HIV makes its way out of the body of an infected person through four fluids: blood, breast milk, vaginal fluids, and semen or male ejaculate. (These last two are sometimes lumped together just as "sexual fluids.") In order for someone to become infected with the virus, one of these infected fluids has to come in contact with an open pathway into the body. Knowing all the ins and outs of HIV transmission, including levels of risk, can be tricky. For more information on the known ways to contract HIV, read Routes of HIV transmission?

Remember that the 'H' in 'HIV' stands for human? only people can pass HIV on to other people, no matter how many mosquitoes bite and no matter how much animal blood is on your butcher's smock!

Alice!
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Sexual & Reproductive Health
Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI's)
HIV/AIDS

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