Drug and alcohol use can also be dangerous for people who are taking antiretroviral medications (ARVs). Drug users are less likely to be adherent to their medications, and street drugs may have dangerous interactions with ARVs. Fact sheet 494 has more information on individual drugs and HIV. Drug and alcohol treatment to stop drug use can lower your risk of HIV infection.

Injection drug and alcohol use are major factors in the spread of HIV infection. Outside of Africa, injection drug use now accounts for 1 in 3 new HIV infections. Shared equipment for using drugs can carry HIV and hepatitis viruses, and drug and alcohol use is linked with unsafe sexual activity.

Drugs and alcohol are a major cause of new HIV infections. Shared equipment can spread HIV, hepatitis, and other diseases. Alcohol and drug use, even when just used recreationally, contribute to unsafe sexual activities and an increase in sexually transmitted infections.

MAKING SHARED EQUIPMENT HARMFUL

HIV infection spreads easily when people share equipment to inject drugs. Sharing equipment also spreads hepatitis B, hepatitis C, and other serious diseases.

Drug use, including methamphetamine or alcohol, increases the chance that people will not protect themselves during sexual activity. Someone who is trading sex for drugs might find it difficult to set limits on what they are willing to do. Drug and alcohol use may reduce condom use and safer sex practices.

To protect yourself from infection, never re-use any equipment for using drugs. Even if you re-use your own syringes, clean them thoroughly between uses. Cleaning is only partly effective.

In some communities, new syringes can be bought without a prescription. Also, needle exchange programs in some areas provide free, new syringes. These programs reduce the rate of new HIV infections.

Drug use can lead to missed doses of ARVs. This increases the chances of treatment failure and resistance to medications.

Mixed recreational drugs and ARVs can be dangerous. Drug interactions can cause serious side effects or dangerous overdoses.

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