

ORIGINAL

"REPLY"

REMARKS

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(GREETINGS TO HOSTS, GUESTS, FRIENDS, ETC.)

FOR ALMOST TWO YEARS NOW, I'VE BEEN GIVING THE AMERICAN PEOPLE THE FACTS ABOUT AIDS.

AND THE FACTS ARE NOT VERY NICE.

NO DOUBT YOU'VE HEARD OR READ QUITE A BIT ABOUT THIS DISEASE ALREADY. SO WHAT I'M GOING TO DO THIS EVENING IS TO BRING YOU UP TO DATE ON SOME OF THESE FACTS AND SHARE WITH YOU MY FEELINGS ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS INFORMATION.

THEN WE'LL HAVE SOME QUESTIONS AND I'LL HAVE A CHANCE TO HEAR YOUR POINTS OF VIEW, ALSO.

FIRST OF ALL, THE VIRUS WE'RE DEALING WITH IS STILL SOMETHING OF A MYSTERY TO OUR SCIENTISTS -- AND TO SCIENTISTS AROUND THE WORLD. WE'RE SO USED TO HAVING SCIENTISTS TELL US EVERYTHING WE NEED TO KNOW ... AS SOON AS WE NEED TO KNOW IT ... THAT IT'S HARD TO IMAGINE SOMETHING LIKE AIDS COMING ALONG AND BEING A PUZZLE TO THE BEST MINDS IN RESEARCH...

AND IT'S BEEN THAT WAY FOR 6 YEARS!

BUT UNFORTUNATELY THAT'S STILL THE CASE. AND THAT'S WHY WE DON'T HAVE A VACCINE YET THAT WILL PROTECT PEOPLE FROM CONTRACTING AIDS. SO IF YOU'RE IGNORING ALL THE WARNINGS ABOUT AIDS ... THINKING THAT A VACCINE OR A MAGIC DRUG IS RIGHT AROUND THE CORNER AND YOU'LL BE PROTECTED IF YOU CATCH IT ... YOU'D BETTER THINK AGAIN.

THE ONLY THING THAT'S AROUND THE CORNER ... IS ANOTHER CORNER.

WE DON'T KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT THE DISEASE OF AIDS -- BUT WE KNOW ENOUGH TO TAKE IT VERY, VERY SERIOUSLY. FOR EXAMPLE...

* AIDS IS VIRTUALLY FATAL: 93 PERCENT OF THE PEOPLE WHO WERE DIAGNOSED AS HAVING AIDS BACK IN 1981 HAVE SINCE DIED OF THE DISEASE. IN MEDICINE, A DEATH RATE OF 93 PERCENT IS AS BAD AS A RATE OF 100 PERCENT.

* THE SECOND THING WE KNOW IS WHERE TO LOOK FOR THIS DISEASE. ONE PLACE IS THE BRAIN AND THE CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM. YOU MAY HAVE HEARD OR READ ABOUT THAT BECAUSE IT'S BEEN IN THE NEWS LATELY. BUT, AS BAD AS THAT IS, THAT'S NOT WHERE THE AIDS VIRUS HAS BEEN DOING ITS WORST DAMAGE FOR THE PAST 6 YEARS.

THE AIDS VIRUS FEEDS ON -- AND DESTROYS -- THOSE SPECIAL WHITE BLOOD CELLS THAT ARE THE BASIS OF OUR IMMUNE SYSTEM. THAT'S WHY AIDS IS A KILLER DISEASE. LET ME EXPLAIN THAT.

WHEN ANY STRANGE BUG INVADES THE HUMAN BLOODSTREAM, YOU GET SICK. BUT THEN YOUR WHITE BLOOD CELLS GO INTO ACTION AND KILL THE INVADERS ... AND YOU GET WELL. IT'S AS SIMPLE AS THAT.

BUT THE AIDS VIRUS IS DIFFERENT. WHEN THIS VIRUS ENTERS THE BODY, IT HEADS RIGHT FOR THE WHITE BLOOD CELLS -- AND KILLS THEM. WHEN THAT HAPPENS, YOU ARE AN EASY TARGET FOR ANY DISEASE THAT COMES ALONG.

REMEMBER, FOR THE MOST PART, AIDS ITSELF DOESN'T KILL YOU. THE AIDS VIRUS JUST MAKES IT POSSIBLE FOR ANYTHING ELSE TO KILL YOU INSTEAD.

SINCE THE AIDS VIRUS FEEDS ON WHITE BLOOD CELLS, IT APPEARS WHERE YOU FIND HIGH CONCENTRATIONS OF SUCH CELLS. AND THAT OCCURS MAINLY IN TWO BODY FLUIDS: BLOOD AND SEMEN.

SINCE THIS IS THE CASE, WE THEREFORE ALSO KNOW THE WAYS IN WHICH THE AIDS VIRUS IS SPREAD. IT'S SPREAD WHEN ANY AIDS-INFECTED BLOOD AND/OR SEMEN FROM ONE PERSON GETS INTO THE BLOODSTREAM OF ANOTHER PERSON.

THAT'S SOMETHING THAT DOES NOT HAPPEN BY ACCIDENT. YOU TRANSMIT -- OR CATCH -- AIDS ONLY IF YOU DO SOMETHING THAT WILL PASS AIDS-INFECTED BLOOD AND/OR SEMEN BETWEEN YOU AND SOMEONE ELSE.

YOU CAN SHARE WATER GLASSES, BATH TOWELS, TOILET SEATS, SWEATSHIRTS, AND PET DOGS AND CATS WITH OTHER PEOPLE ... AND YOU WON'T GET AIDS. YOU MAY GET A COLD OR YOU MAY CATCH THE FLU.

BUT THAT'S NOT HOW YOU'LL GET AIDS.

THEN EXACTLY HOW IS THE VIRUS PASSED FROM PERSON TO PERSON?
THERE HAVE BEEN ONLY FOUR WAYS.

ONE WAY WAS THROUGH BLOOD TRANSFUSIONS. THAT WAS A PROBLEM
UNTIL 1985, WHEN WE DEVELOPED A VERY GOOD BLOOD TEST TO DETECT
THE PRESENCE OF ANTIBODIES TO THE VIRUS AND, THEREFORE, THE
PRESENCE OF THE AIDS VIRUS ITSELF.

TODAY, OUR BLOOD SUPPLY IS AS SAFE AS WE CAN MAKE IT.
GETTING AIDS FROM A BLOOD TRANSFUSION IS NOW AN EXTREMELY REMOTE
POSSIBILITY. WE COULDN'T SAY THAT JUST A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO.

THAT LEAVES THREE WAYS THAT ARE STILL IMPORTANT.

THE MOST COMMON OF THESE THREE IS THROUGH SEXUAL INTERCOURSE. A MAN WITH AIDS WILL PASS THE VIRUS TO HIS SEXUAL PARTNER THROUGH HIS SEMEN.

BUT CERTAIN SEX PRACTICES NOT ONLY PRODUCE SEMEN, THEY ALSO CAN CAUSE BLEEDING. THIS IS PARTICULARLY TRUE DURING ANAL INTERCOURSE.

THE HUMAN RECTUM WAS JUST NOT DESIGNED FOR THAT KIND OF THING. IT IS EASILY TORN DURING ANAL INTERCOURSE, CAUSING BLEEDING. AGAIN, THE INFECTED SPERM OF THE MAN MAY DIRECTLY ENTER HIS PARTNER'S BLOODSTREAM AT THAT POINT.

ANAL INTERCOURSE IS MOST OFTEN PRACTICED BY HOMOSEXUALS AND BISEXUAL MALES. THAT ACCOUNTS FOR THE FACT THAT 2 OUT OF EVERY 3 VICTIMS OF AIDS ARE EITHER HOMOSEXUALS OR BISEXUAL MALES.

HOWEVER, HOMOSEXUALITY BY ITSELF DOES NOT CAUSE AIDS. IN FACT, WE KNOW THAT MANY HOMOSEXUALS DO NOT ENGAGE IN THESE ROUGHER KINDS OF SEXUAL INTERCOURSE. AND SO, THEY DON'T HAVE AIDS.

AND THEY'RE AS FRIGHTENED OF THE DISEASE AS THE REST OF US ARE.

WHAT IT COMES DOWN TO IS THIS: WE'RE FIGHTING A DEADLY DISEASE ... WE'RE NOT FIGHTING THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE IT. THAT DIFFERENCE HAS ALWAYS BEEN IMPORTANT TO AMERICANS, WHETHER WE'VE BEEN FIGHTING SMALLPOX, POLIO, MEASLES, SYPHILIS, OR ANYTHING ELSE.

IN NONE OF THOSE CASES DID WE ALSO FIGHT THE PEOPLE WHO WERE SICK.

AND I CAN ASSURE YOU, AS YOUR SURGEON GENERAL, WE'RE NOT GOING TO CHANGE NOW ... AIDS OR NO AIDS.

I SAID THERE WERE THREE WAYS TO GET AIDS. ONE WAS THROUGH SEXUAL INTERCOURSE -- ESPECIALLY, BUT NOT EXCLUSIVELY ANAL INTERCOURSE.

THE SECOND WAY IS BY SHARING THE NEEDLES AND OTHER CONTAMINATED DRUG "WORKS" OF AN AIDS-INFECTED DRUG ADDICT.

WHAT HAPPENS IN THOSE CASES IS THAT A TINY DROP OF CONTAMINATED BLOOD IS LEFT IN THE NEEDLE. THE NEXT PERSON USING THAT NEEDLE TO "SHOOT UP" WILL GET THAT DROP OF BLOOD ALONG WITH THE DRUG.

THE THIRD WAY TO GET AIDS IS TO BE BORN OF A MOTHER WHO HAS AIDS. AT LAST COUNT, OVER 600 CHILDREN IN THIS COUNTRY WERE BORN WITH AIDS. IN THOSE CASES, THE AIDS VIRUS WAS ALREADY IN THE MOTHER'S BLOODSTREAM AND PASSED INTO THE CHILD'S BLOODSTREAM SOMETIME DURING THE PREGNANCY OR DURING CHILDBIRTH ITSELF.

HOW DO WE KNOW THE EXTENT OF THE AIDS EPIDEMIC?

THE U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE GETS REPORTS FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY EVERY WEEK. WE SORT OUT AND ANALYZE THESE REPORTS AND THAT GIVES US A CLEARER, MORE DETAILED PICTURE AS TO WHERE THE AIDS EPIDEMIC IS JUST TAKING OFF AND WHERE IT'S AT ITS WORST.

FOR EXAMPLE, WE KNOW THAT OVER 53,000 PEOPLE HAVE CAUGHT THE AIDS VIRUS SINCE JUNE 1981. WE KNOW THAT ABOUT TWO-THIRDS OF THEM HAVE BEEN HOMOSEXUALS AND BISEXUAL MALES.

AND WE KNOW THAT ANOTHER 25 PERCENT ARE DRUG ADDICTS WHO "SHOOT" DANGEROUS DRUGS INTO THEIR BLOODSTREAMS, USING OTHER PEOPLE'S CONTAMINATED NEEDLES.

IN OTHER WORDS, ABOUT 9 OF EVERY 10 PEOPLE WITH AIDS ARE EITHER HOMOSEXUALS, BISEXUAL MALES, OR INTRAVENOUS DRUG ABUSERS.

AND I'M SORRY TO SAY THAT WE'VE ALSO LEARNED FROM THESE WEEKLY REPORTS THAT MINORITIES IN AMERICA ARE PROPORTIONATELY SUFFERING THE MOST FROM THIS DISEASE.

FOR EXAMPLE, IN THE GENERAL POPULATION OF THE UNITED STATES, 1 OF EVERY 8 EVERY AMERICANS IS BLACK. HOWEVER, 2 OF EVERY 8 AMERICANS WITH AIDS IS BLACK ... OR 25 PERCENT OF ALL PERSONS WITH AIDS.

BLACKS COMPRISE 15 PERCENT OF THE HOMOSEXUALS AND BISEXUAL MALES WITH AIDS...

43 PERCENT OF ALL DRUG ADDICTS WITH AIDS ARE BLACK...

BLACK CHILDREN MAKE UP 54 PERCENT OF ALL CHILDREN WITH AIDS...

BLACKS MAKE UP 70 PERCENT OF ALL THE HETEROSEXUALS WITH AIDS. MOST OF THESE ARE WOMEN WHO ARE EITHER THE SEXUAL PARTNERS OF MEN WITH AIDS OR THEY ARE PROSTITUTES WHO PICKED UP THE VIRUS FROM AIDS-INFECTED CLIENTS...

AND NEARLY 90 PERCENT OF ALL BABIES NOW BORN WITH AIDS ARE
BLACK.

THESE ARE VERY, VERY HIGH FIGURES. THEY INDICATE THAT BLACK
AMERICANS ARE SUFFERING DISPROPORTIONATELY FROM THE EPIDEMIC OF
AIDS.

HERE IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY ... RIGHT HERE ... IS AMERICA'S
FRONT LINE IN THE BATTLE AGAINST AIDS. ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT
-- FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL -- ARE DOING WHAT THEY CAN. AND I'M
DELIGHTED TO HAVE DR. DEBORAH PROTHROW-STITH HERE WITH US
TONIGHT. SHE'S THE COMMISSIONER OF HEALTH FOR THE COMMONWEALTH
OF MASSACHUSETTS. AND SHE'S AS WORRIED AS I AM.

BUT GOVERNMENT IS NOT GOING TO SOLVE THIS PROBLEM BY ITSELF.
THE AIDS EPIDEMIC IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY CAN ONLY BE SOLVED BY
THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN THAT COMMUNITY.

IT CAN BE DONE THROUGH EDUCATION, WHICH SHOULD CONVINC
PEOPLE NOT TO ENGAGE IN HIGH-RISK BEHAVIOR, SUCH AS ANAL
INTERCOURSE OR NEEDLE-SHARING.

WITHOUT A VACCINE, THE ONLY WAY TO FIGHT THE DISEASE OF AIDS
IS THROUGH PUBLIC EDUCATION ... ESPECIALLY EDUCATION OF OUR YOUNG
PEOPLE.

THAT'S WHY I'M HERE IN ROXBURY TONIGHT. I BELIEVE THAT BLACK WOMEN AND BLACK MEN ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THE HAVOC THAT AIDS IS BRINGING TO THEIR COMMUNITY AND WANT TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT.

THEREFORE, I WANT TO HELP THE PEOPLE OF THIS COMMUNITY UNDERSTAND THE THREAT THAT'S IN THEIR MIDST AND ALSO HELP THEM BEGIN TO TAKE ACTION AGAINST IT.

AIDS IS DANGEROUS. IT IS FATAL. AND IT IS SPREADING. THE AIDS VIRUS IS SPREADING FASTEST, HOWEVER, AMONG BLACK AMERICANS.

BUT YOU -- EACH OF YOU INDIVIDUALLY AND ALL OF YOU ALL TOGETHER -- HAVE THE POWER TO STOP THE DISEASE RIGHT IN ITS TRACKS.

YOU CAN MAKE SURE -- THROUGH YOUR OWN BEHAVIOR -- THAT YOU ARE NEVER AT RISK AND THAT THE PEOPLE YOU LOVE AND RESPECT ARE NEVER AT RISK EITHER.

THE TIME TO MAKE THAT PROMISE TO YOURSELF, TO YOUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY, AND TO YOUR COMMUNITY -- IS RIGHT NOW.

BUT WHAT IS REALLY INVOLVED HERE, IF YOU DO MAKE THAT PROMISE -- AND KEEP IT? I'VE TALKED ABOUT SOME THINGS YOU SHOULD NOT DO. BUT WHAT ARE THE THINGS YOU SHOULD DO TO AVOID CATCHING AIDS?

THE FIRST AND BEST DEFENSE AGAINST THE VIRUS IS NOT TO HAVE SEX AT ALL ... WITH ANYONE. AND FOR YOUNG PEOPLE STILL IN SCHOOL, I THINK THAT'S STILL THE BEST ANSWER.

BUT IT'S NOT A GOOD ANSWER FOR MOST ADULTS. SO THE NEXT-BEST THING TO DO IS TO FIND THAT ONE SPECIAL PERSON WHOM YOU LOVE AND RESPECT -- AND WHO LOVES AND RESPECTS YOU IN RETURN -- AND BE FAITHFUL TO HIM OR TO HER.

THAT'S CALLED "MONOGAMY" AND, FOR MOST PEOPLE, IT'S THE ONLY SAFE WAY TO LIVE IN THE "AGE OF AIDS" ... OR, FOR THAT MATTER, AT ANY TIME.

BUT IF YOU HAVEN'T FOUND THE RIGHT PERSON YET, THEN YOU MUST TAKE PRECAUTIONS IF YOU HAVE SEX WITH OTHER PEOPLE. REMEMBER, AS FAR AS YOUR HEALTH IS CONCERNED, WHEN YOU HAVE SEX WITH SOMEBODY, IT'S THE SAME AS HAVING SEX WITH EVERYONE THAT HE OR SHE HAS HAD SEX WITH UP TO THEN.

THEREFORE, JUST TO BE SURE, IF YOU'RE A MAN, YOU SHOULD WEAR A CONDOM FROM START TO FINISH. IF YOU'RE A WOMAN, YOU SHOULD MAKE SURE YOUR PARTNER WEARS A CONDOM FROM START TO FINISH.

CONDOMS ARE NOT THE PERFECT ANSWER. BUT NOTHING IN LIFE IS PERFECT. SO FAR, HOWEVER, THE PROPER USE OF A CONDOM IS A PERSON'S BEST DEFENSE AGAINST THE PASSING OF THE AIDS VIRUS DURING SEXUAL INTERCOURSE.

AS FAR AS NEEDLE-SHARING IS CONCERNED, THE BEST DEFENSE IS, OF COURSE, NOT TO "DO DRUGS" AT ALL. PERIOD. IF YOU ARE ON DRUGS NOW, GET HELP AND GET OFF DRUGS.

BUT UNTIL YOU ARE CLEAN OF DRUGS, DO NOT USE SOMEONE ELSE'S NEEDLES OR OTHER "DRUG WORKS."

I HOPE YOU REMEMBER AND FOLLOW THIS ADVICE. I'M OFFERING IT TO YOU BECAUSE, AS YOUR SURGEON GENERAL, I WANT YOU TO LIVE FULL AND LONG LIVES. I DON'T WANT TO LOSE ANY OF YOU TO THE DREAD DISEASE OF AIDS.

THANK YOU. AND NOW, IF THERE ARE ANY QUESTIONS, I'D BE GLAD TO ANSWER THEM.

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