

Occupational Health Alert

December 2014

Occupational HIV Transmission in the Adult Entertainment Film Industry

Key Prevention Points

- Always use condoms
- Get tested frequently for HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases
- Consider HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP)

What happened? A male adult entertainment actor obtained a test for HIV that was negative. Over the following two-week period, the actor had unprotected sex with several other male actors during two separate film shoots. During the second film shoot, he had symptoms of a viral infection. The actor went to a clinic and had another blood test that showed he had recently become infected with HIV. The local public health department initiated follow-up with the sexual contacts of this actor. Thus far, one of the male actors from the second film shoot has tested newly positive for HIV. Public health investigation and laboratory results provide very strong evidence that the actor transmitted HIV to the other actor as a result of unprotected sex during the film shoot.

Why is this important? The actor thought that he was “negative” for HIV at the time of the two film shoots, but in fact he was infected and probably transmitted HIV to another actor. Some adult entertainment film companies require actors to have a negative HIV test within 2 weeks prior to a film shoot. However, very early in an HIV infection the test can be negative even though the actor really does have HIV. In this case, the actor and production company thought he was HIV-negative during filming. Shortly after his negative test, HIV levels in his body rose rapidly to where he could infect other actors through unprotected sex. In addition, other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) can be transmitted by unprotected sex.

What should be done in light of this investigation?

- Correct and consistent use of condoms is known to reduce the risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. Adult entertainment film actors should use condoms, and film producers should require on-set condom use by actors. The California Division of Occupational Safety and Health (Cal/OSHA) has determined that employers are required to furnish and ensure the use of condoms in the production of adult films at no cost to the actors.
- Actors should continue to be tested for HIV. Testing for other STDs should include urine, throat, and rectum tests. Actors should get vaccinated for hepatitis A, hepatitis B, and human papilloma virus (HPV); each of these diseases can be transmitted by unprotected sex.
- HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis, or PrEP, is a daily oral medication that can help prevent HIV-negative individuals from acquiring the virus. In combination with condoms, PrEP can be an effective HIV prevention tool. PrEP, however, will not protect against other STDs and should NOT be used without the concurrent use of condoms. HIV-negative adult entertainment film actors should discuss the use of PrEP with their health care providers.

Actors should be aware that under state and federal occupational safety and health laws, film producers are required to provide safeguards to assure safe and healthy work environments for their employees. This includes protection from HIV and other bloodborne diseases.

For more information see:

Cal/OSHA “Vital Information For Workers and Employers in the Adult Film Industry”

<http://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/adultfilmindustry.html>

Federal OSHA Bloodborne Pathogens Standard Fact Sheet

https://www.osha.gov/OshDoc/data_BloodborneFacts/bbfact01.pdf

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) Guidelines

<http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/prevention/research/prep/>

To obtain this document in an alternate format, call (510) 620-5757 (CA Relay Service: 711), & please allow at least 10 days.



The Occupational Health Branch in the California Department of Public Health is devoted to improving worker health and safety through prevention activities.

See www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/ohb