

# A LINE ON LIFE

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## AIDS in Arizona

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Living in Yuma helps us to avoid some big city problems. If they do come to Yuma, it is years later. Some people feel that **AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome)** cannot effect us in Yuma. Surprise! According to the *Yuma County Department of Public Health* statistics released recently, as of January 1, 1991, AIDS is here and spreading!

In Yuma County, 57 people are **HIV+ (HIV positive)** – they have tested positive for antibodies against the **Human Immunodeficiency Virus**. In other words, they can spread the disease to others through their body fluids – blood, vaginal secretions, and semen – even though they seem perfectly healthy in all other ways. (Remember, the tests for HIV cannot detect the presence of antibodies until at least 3-6 months after being infected.)

An additional four Yuma people are showing the first symptoms of the disease – **ARC (AIDS Related Complex)**. (One of these has already died.) Another 16 Yuma citizens have been detected with full-blown AIDS, and 7 of them have died. In these statistics, Yuma is typically third highest county in Arizona, following only Maricopa and Pima.

For Arizona as a whole, there have been 2,478 victims of HIV+, 395 with ARC, and 1,310 with full-blown AIDS. In these categories, there have already been 27, 39, and 744 deaths, respectively.

For both ARC and AIDS, the number of cases peak in the 30-39 age group. However, those who are HIV+ – the earliest time in which the disease is detectable – are most likely to be in the 20-29 age range.

For HIV+, ARC, and AIDS in Arizona, the primary sources of infection for all adolescents and adults are homosexual contacts and IV drug use. For both HIV+ and ARC, the third ranked cause is *heterosexual* contacts. However, with full-blown AIDS, heterosexual contacts are also exceeded by blood transfusions as a cause. This is probably because these AIDS patients were infected before the more accurate screening of donated blood was begun. (Remember, although there is still a very small possibility of being infected

with HIV by *receiving* blood, there is *no* possibility of getting AIDS from *donating* blood.)

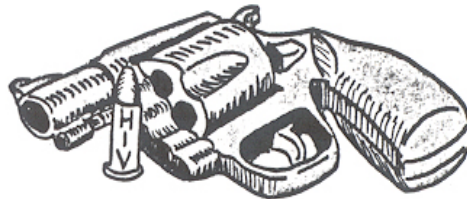
For children, the only known sources are blood transfusions or parents who are infected. (Infected mothers usually give the disease to their children during pregnancy.) Typically, those children infected with transfusions are hemophiliacs.

Although only 5% of adolescent and adult victims of full-blown AIDS are women, the percentage of women with ARC and HIV+ is up to 9%. Women are the group that is showing the highest increase in infection rates. The most frequent sources of infection for women are IV drug use and heterosexual contacts – most likely with men who are (openly or secretly) IV users or bisexuals.

In 1988, an **AIDS Program** was established in Yuma County to prevent the spread of HIV disease (HIV+, ARC, AIDS). It offers HIV counseling and testing, community education, and gathers information about the disease. The staff can make presentations about AIDS to suit the needs of any group. With an office at 201 S. First Avenue in Yuma, they have pamphlets, posters and other information on AIDS – including some videos available for loan. Although all these services are free of charge, the office needs to be contacted at least two weeks in advance for any programs.

In addition, free and anonymous HIV testing and counseling is available Mondays through Thursdays by appointment. There is also a support group for HIV victims that meets at 7 P.M. each Monday. A support group for friends, families, and lovers of HIV victims meets on the fourth Friday of each month. Any appointments – or information about other services – can be obtained by calling **329-0751** between 8:00 A.M. and 4:30 P.M. Monday through Friday.

It is important that you do *not* dismiss the danger of HIV. If you use IV drugs or are sexually active, it is much like playing **Russian roulette**. (With a bullet in one of the six chambers of a revolver, you spin the cylinder, point it at your head, and pull the trigger). In both cases,



you may be lucky, and nothing may happen. But if something does happen, in both cases it is deadly.

There is at least one big difference between Russian roulette and becoming HIV+. *You* are the only direct victim of the bullet in Russian roulette. However, even before you know you are HIV+, you can pass the infection on to others. Unfortunately, you don't usually give AIDS to those you hate; you typically pass it on to those you *love*.

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