



Glossary of HIV and AIDS Associated Terminology

Language shapes beliefs and may influence behaviours. Considered use of correct and sensitive terms has the power to eradicate stigma often associated with HIV and AIDS, as well as people living with or are affected by HIV.

Terms to Avoid	Correct and Sensitive Terms	Rationale
HIV / AIDS (confusion between HIV and AIDS)	HIV should not be equated with AIDS (and vice versa).	<p>HIV (Human immunodeficiency virus) is the virus that attacks the human immune system. AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome), on the other hand, is the most progressive stage of HIV infection when the body's immune system has been completely weakened and the person is afflicted with opportunistic infections.</p> <p>Consider using the most specific and appropriate term based on the context of discussion to avoid confusion between HIV and AIDS (choose only one). For example, 'people living with HIV', 'HIV infection', 'HIV prevention programme', 'AIDS diagnosis' and 'children orphaned by AIDS'.</p> <p>Both 'HIV epidemic' and 'AIDS epidemic' are widely accepted, but 'HIV epidemic' is the more inclusive term.</p>
AIDS carrier / HIV carrier	People living with HIV / HIV-positive persons	'AIDS carrier' / 'HIV carrier' is highly stigmatising and very offensive to people living with HIV. It implies that people living with HIV carry contagious diseases or misfortune. They are also highly inaccurate. One cannot be infected with AIDS. <u>HIV is the infectious agent, not AIDS.</u>
AIDS-infected / HIV-infected	People living with HIV	Use the internationally recognised term, people living with HIV, as it adds a human dimension to the issue discussed.
AIDS victims / AIDS	People living with HIV	'Victims' and 'sufferers' connote

sufferers		negatively that people living with HIV are powerless and have no control over their lives. Use the internationally recognised term, 'people living with HIV'.
AIDS virus	HIV	There is no AIDS virus. The virus that causes AIDS is the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). Please note that 'virus' in the phrase 'HIV virus' is redundant. Use HIV.
AIDS infection	HIV infection	<u>AIDS is not infectious.</u> Use HIV infection.
AIDS test	HIV test	There is no test for AIDS. Use HIV test or HIV antibody test. 'HIV antibody test' is the more accurate term as the testing modality detects the presence of HIV antibodies in the blood, not the virus.
AIDS patient / HIV patient	People living with HIV	Use the term 'patient' only when referring to a clinical setting. For example, 'patient with HIV-related illness (or disease)'.
Risk of AIDS	Risk of HIV	More accurately, you may say 'risk of HIV infection' or 'risk of exposure to HIV'.
High risk groups	High risk behaviour / high risk practices (for example, 'sharing of contaminated injecting equipment, 'unsafe sexual practices')	'High risk groups' implies that membership to a certain group, rather than behaviour is the important factor in HIV transmission. This term may lull people who do not identify with this 'high risk group' into a false sense of security. It creates stereotypes also of the 'kinds' of people who are at risk of infection. It is high risk behaviour that spreads HIV.
Innocent victims	People living with HIV	It is commonly used to describe HIV-positive children or people with medically acquired HIV infection (for example, HIV infection from transfusion of contaminated blood products). It wrongly implies that people who get infected in other ways are guilty or immoral. Use clear non-judgmental

		descriptions instead, for example children living with HIV, people with medically acquired HIV, people living with HIV.
Aids	AIDS	AIDS is an acronym for 'acquired immune deficiency syndrome'. As such, it needs to be written in all uppercase letters; writing it as 'Aids' might cause confusion with 'aids' as in 'helps'.
Free sex / promiscuous sex / sex out of wedlock	Unprotected sex / Unsafe sex practices	Avoid using those terms when describing the risk of sexual transmission of HIV. One cannot get HIV just from having sex out of wedlock or having multiple partners. HIV can only be transmitted through HIV unprotected sex, i.e. sex without using a condom.
Drug addict	Drug user	The more sensitive and non-derogatory term is 'drug user'. When describing risk of HIV transmission, consider using injecting drug user to place emphasis on high risk behaviour.
Prostitute	Sex worker	The sensitive and non-derogatory term is sex worker. Likewise, when describing the profession, use sex work (as opposed to 'prostitution').

The above content is partially adapted from *UNAIDS Terminology Guidelines (January 2011)*. Updated September 2013.