



Dr. Huizenga

People

Charlie Sheen Claims It's 'Impossible' for Him to Transmit HIV, but His Doctor Says They Can't Say There's 'Zero' Chance

BY LINDSAY KIMBLE | November 17, 2015

[Charlie Sheen](#) claimed in his [Today interview](#) that it's "impossible" for him to transmit the HIV virus to a sexual partner, and that none of the people he has had sexual contact with have gotten the disease.

Sheen, who says he currently has an undetectable amount of the virus in his blood, later clarified to [Matt Lauer](#) that he believed he can't pass on HIV through "protected sex."

However, Sheen's own personal physician, [Doctor Robert Huizenga](#), an assistant professor of clinical medicine at UCLA, clarified moments later that HIV transmission is, indeed possible, if unlikely.

"Individuals who are optimally treated, who have undetectable viral loads, who responsibly use protection – it's incredibly low," Huizenga said. "It's incredibly rare to transmit the virus. We can't say that that's zero, but it's a very, very low number."

PEOPLE first [confirmed](#) Sheen's diagnosis on Monday.

Huizenga said that when Sheen was first diagnosed four years ago, he was immediately put on a treatment of strong antiretroviral drugs, which suppressed the virus.

"Unfortunately we don't have a cure yet, it's suppressed the virus to the point that he is absolutely healthy from that vantage," Huizenga said on Tuesday. "My biggest concern with Charlie as a patient is his substance abuse and depression from the disease – more than what the HIV virus could do in terms of shortening his life because it's not going to."



Sheen admitted to still using alcohol but contended that he no longer struggled with drug abuse.

Huizenga also said that chances of the 50-year-old's health to change between screenings are also "very low" if Sheen continues to be "conscientious."

Joel Goldman, Managing Director of The Elizabeth Taylor AIDS Foundation, tells PEOPLE that it is totally "possible for people with different statuses to have healthy sexually relationships."

Goldman says that communication is key and partners should take precautions to prevent transmission, like taking PrEP as prescribed by a doctor.

Karen Dykes, infectious disease nurse practitioner and educator with 10 years experience working with HIV/AIDS patients, adds that, in reality, "HIV is not that easy to get."

"The issue being viral loads being high," she tells PEOPLE. "The higher the viral load means someone is newly diagnosed or not on treatment, that number goes up."

Dykes recommends partners use condoms or that the negative partner take a protective medication, such as the aforementioned PrEP.

"Again, the status of the HIV-positive partner, if they're undetectable or not then you can have that discussion on safer sex and how you want to proceed," she says.

Sheen told Lauer that all of his past sexual partners are aware of his diagnosis and since then he has only had unprotected sex with two women who were both "warned ahead of time" and under the care of his doctor."

To learn more about living with HIV/AIDS today and to contribute in the fight against the diseases, visit amfAR.org.

<http://www.people.com/article/charlie-sheen-says-impossible-transmit-HIV>