

## **HIV among drug addicts increasing: study hiv among drug addicts increasing study Thursday, June 26, 2008**

In the fight against HIV, the stress is to promote safe sex, but away from the spotlight, though just as dangerous, is the use of drugs.

According to a new study by the UN agency on drug control, the number of HIV positive injecting drug users in the subcontinent is increasing.

And most drug users don't even know that a needle could give them HIV. Most drug users usually share needles, a very high-risk transmitter of HIV.

In a double whammy, a new UN study has revealed that most drug users also have very erratic and usually unsafe sexual habits. In fact, among women drug addicts, some even turn to sex trade to fund their drug habit.

A survey of nearly 6000 drug addicts across India shows that almost half of them currently inject drugs. It also shows that more than 1400 lent their used syringes to fellow addicts while 1279 borrowed syringes from other addicts.

Most drug addicts had more than one sexual partner and barely 20 per cent ever used a condom with their partner. Many also admitted to using drugs just before or after having sex.

"Most of these people are sexually active. They rarely have safe sex so there is risk of transmitting to spouses and partners," says Dr Suresh Kumar, author, UNODC Regional Drug Report.

The study will now be used by the government in its drug intervention programmes.