

**Indian prisons becoming HIV haven**  
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Indian prisons are now facing new trouble in the form of HIV because of rampant drug abuse and unsafe sexual practices amongst prisoners.

Authorities are worried that this might spiral into a crisis as in India prisoners are rarely monitored.

They are not under any HIV prevention program and once released from jail, they often go on to pass the disease to their spouses.

Tihar jail, is one of the country's most guarded and high profile prisons but even here drugs manage to find their way in

Sunil Kumar, law officer and PRO at Tihar Prison said, "Very rarely, but with the connivance of guards or from relatives of prisoners ... drugs do come in."

A prisoner said that he had seen many people share one needle to do drugs.

Drug abuse in Indian prisons has always been a badly kept secret. But authorities are worried because HIV is spreading due to infected needles.

To add to it homosexuality and sodomy only make prisoners more vulnerable.

At present there are more than 3 lakh prisoners across Indian jails, multiply this by 10, because that's what officials say the annual turnover is.

This means that every year at least 30 lakh people get in and out of Indian jails, inside - they are at high risk for HIV, outside - they become high risk for the people they interact with.

But ironically despite efforts to spread awareness prisoners here don't even have access to condoms.

Sunil Kumar said, "In the past we tried to introduce condom distribution but it was resented by some prisoners and officials, they feel we are promoting sex inside jails."

It's a catch 22 for the jail authorities but an issue that can't be ignored anymore. In the last two weeks alone, five prisoners at Tihar have tested positive for HIV.