The following points for consideration on the portrayal of communicable diseases were created as a resource for entertainment development and production. They are not intended to limit the creative process.

**Depicting Sexual Activities and Attitudes:**
- Recognize that sex is a healthy and natural part of life requiring responsibility to oneself and one’s partner.
- Try to encourage, when appropriate, parent-child and peer conversations about sex which include information about preventing sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV.
- Recognize and respect abstinence as a normal, healthy alternative to sex.
- Consider whether casual sex is important to the story.
- Indicate the consequences of unprotected sex. Even oral sex without the protection of a condom is a high-risk behavior.
- Include discussion of and negotiation with a partner for safer sex and condom use in appropriate scenes.
- Indicate the consequences of shared needles in scenes involving injected drug use, tattooing, and ear or body piercing. Consider showing or referring to use of new needles and syringes.
- Bear in mind that the use of alcohol and other drugs can lower inhibitions and lead to unsafe sex practices which transmit the AIDS virus and other sexually transmitted diseases.
- Remember that although recent developments in treatment can lead to longer life, AIDS treatments are an ongoing, lifelong commitment and not an easy treatment program. Therefore, prevention is the best protection against all infectious diseases, including HIV and AIDS.

**Depicting People with AIDS:**
- Recognize that no one is immune to AIDS. All segments of society are at potential risk of contracting HIV infection, including teens and young adults.
- Consider that there is no evidence that HIV is transmitted through casual contact, but only through the exchange of blood, semen, vaginal fluids, mother’s milk, and during pregnancy through the placenta.
- People with HIV/AIDS deserve to be shown the sensitivity and respect accorded people with other diseases.
- Recognize the complexities of testing for HIV infection and diagnosis of AIDS. Differentiate between testing positive for HIV antibodies and being diagnosed with AIDS. There is still a great deal of fear attached to HIV testing.
- Bear in mind that there may be a latency period of as much as 10 to 15 years between contracting the virus and the diagnosis of AIDS.
- Remember that there are new treatments related to HIV and AIDS that are taking...
away the stigma of testing HIV positive as being a death sentence. Many with HIV have longer post-infection life spans and more productive lives than before the availability of these treatments. Consider portraying the everyday normalcy of individuals with HIV who are still healthy and productive.

- With the use of universal precautions, medical practitioners who have HIV are not considered a high risk to patients in most medical procedures.

- Be aware that consumer-controlled test kits (popularly known as home test kits) were first licensed in 1997. Although home HIV tests are sometimes advertised through the Internet, currently only the Home Access test is approved by the Food and Drug Administration. The Home Access test kit can be found at most local drug stores and the procedure involves pricking your finger with a special device, placing drops of blood on a specially treated card, then mailing the card to a licensed laboratory for testing. Customers are given an identification number to use when phoning for the test results, and may speak to a counselor before taking the test, while waiting for the test result, and when getting the result.

- Consider, when appropriate, the devastation that AIDS produces in African nations: for example, the risk of contracting AIDS from a blood transfusion, economic turmoil, etc.
AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome) is a condition caused by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) that attacks the immune system, crippling the cells that protect the body from infections. People with AIDS are vulnerable to illnesses that are not usually a threat to anyone whose immune system is intact.¹

HIV is transmitted through exchange of certain fluids (blood, semen, pre-ejaculate, vaginal secretions, mother's milk) in four main ways: by having sex—anal, vaginal, or oral—with someone who is infected with the AIDS virus; by sharing drug needles and syringes, tattoo or ear/body-piercing needles with an infected person; from an infected mother before, during, or after birth; and through exposure to contaminated blood.²

Once the virus enters the blood stream, it attacks and destroys a key type of white blood cell in the immune system called a T cell. At first the body makes more cells, but after several years, so much of the immune system has been compromised that the person can't make enough healthy T cells to fight off diseases. When this happens, we say the person has developed AIDS. About half the people with HIV infection will develop AIDS within 10 years. Some may develop AIDS within 2 years, but others may live 15 years or more without developing AIDS.³ As the immune system fails, the patient becomes more vulnerable to other infections and malignancies such as tuberculosis, pneumonia, and Kaposi's sarcoma.⁴

Despite the lack of a cure, in many cases, antiviral drugs, including AZT and protease inhibitors, help slow the progression of the AIDS virus. Improved treatment has extended the life of some patients. Vaccines to prevent HIV infection are being developed, but they are many years from being approved for use, even if they pass all tests. Because there are many types of HIV and the virus changes very quickly, many people think no vaccine will be completely effective. The most effective way of controlling the epidemic is prevention. That means abstaining from sex or practicing safer sex by limiting the number of partners and using condoms consistently. It means refraining from injection drug use or at least not sharing needles or syringes.⁵

**HIV/AIDS: United States Data**

1. The distribution of adult/adolescent cases by exposure category are:⁶
   - Men having sex with men: 334,073
   - Injecting drug users: 179,228
   - Men who have sex with men and inject drugs: 45,266
   - Heterosexual contact: 70,582
     (24,985 males and 45,597 females)
- Sex with injecting drug user: 27,265
- Sex with bisexual male: 3,263
- Sex with person with hemophilia: 445
- Sex with HIV-infected person (risk not specified): 38,658
- Receipt of blood transfusion, blood components or tissue: 8,430
- Other/risk not reported or identified: 60,157 (43,522 males and 16,635 females)

2. Breakdown of exposure categories for cases in children under age 13 are:
- Hemophilia or coagulation disorder: 233
- Mother with/at risk for HIV: 7,828
- Receipt of blood transfusion, blood components, or tissue: 376
- Other/risk not reported or identified: 159


4. Breakdown of adult/adolescent AIDS cases by race/ethnicity:
- White (not Hispanic): 285,331 males and 26,044 females
- Black: 194,594 males and 67,723 females
- Hispanic: 105,660 males and 23,895 females
- Asian/Pacific Islander: 4,524 males and 609 females
- Total: 590,109 males and 118,271 females (708,898 total cases)

HIV/AIDS: Worldwide

Based on estimates from the United Nations AIDS program, approximately 47 million people have been infected with HIV since the start of the global epidemic. Through December 1998, an estimated 14 million children and adults have died, and an estimated 33.4 million people are living with HIV infection or AIDS.

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**Preventing AIDS Transmission**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column A: Sources of the Virus</th>
<th>Column B: Entry Points of the Virus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blood</td>
<td>Open Wounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semen</td>
<td>Abrasions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaginal/Cervical Fluids</td>
<td>Cuts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart Fluids</td>
<td>Eyes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lung Fluids</td>
<td>Nose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint Fluids</td>
<td>Mouth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spinal Fluids</td>
<td>Penis Opening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amniotic Fluids</td>
<td>Vaginal Opening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breast Milk</td>
<td>Sphincter and Rectum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Keep everything in Column A away from everything in Column B.

**Sources:**

11. Chart courtesy of John Bonnage, Ph.D.