

# 70pc believe a kiss can lead to AIDS

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Seven out of 10 people believe they can contract AIDS through kissing, a survey has revealed.

And 40 per cent of the 15,000 people surveyed believe they can catch AIDS from a toilet seat. The same number said they thought the virus could be transmitted through coughing or sneezing.

The survey – carried out by the Centre for Clinical Trials and Epidemiological Research – will be presented at the territory's first AIDS conference next week.

The centre's director, Dr Joseph Lau Tak-fai, said that despite improvements in AIDS awareness among the public, "some aspects are not ideal".

"The main misconception seems to be everything surrounding body fluid – even among doctors and social workers.

"They understand how AIDS is transmitted, but they don't understand how it can't be," he said.

The survey is conducted each year by

telephone, post and face-to-face interviews.

One improvement seen over the past year was the realisation the virus could not be transmitted over a meal, Dr Lau said.

Eighty-five per cent of those polled said they understood they could not contract AIDS by having dinner with a sufferer, compared to 68 per cent last year.

Department of Health AIDS consultant Dr Lee Shui-shan said: "People's awareness has been improving, but not to the extent that they know exactly their own risks."

AIDS Concern spokesman Bella Luk To-chu said "the ignorance and stigma [of AIDS] have not improved".

"A lot of people don't even think of getting tested, because they worry if they have the test it means they are admitting to various sexual activities or needle-sharing.

"You can easily promote awareness, but not the level of knowledge needed," she said.