



What is AIDS?

AIDS is short for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. It is the most advanced stage of HIV disease. HIV disease is caused by HIV, the human immunodeficiency virus.

How many people have AIDS?

At the end of 2003, over one million people in the U.S. were living with HIV/AIDS, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The CDC also estimates that about 40,000 women and men are infected with HIV each year in the U.S.

How can I tell if someone has HIV?

You can't. The CDC estimates that as many as one in three people with HIV don't know they are infected. That's why it's so important to avoid risky behaviors with *everyone*.

How could I get HIV?

HIV is transmitted in blood, semen, vaginal fluids, and breast milk. HIV is commonly spread by

- Having unprotected sexual intercourse with someone who has the virus.
- Sharing needles or syringes with someone who has the virus.
- Being deeply punctured with a needle or surgical instrument contaminated with the virus.
- Getting HIV-infected blood, semen, or vaginal secretions into open wounds or sores.

HIV can also be passed from a woman to her fetus during pregnancy or birth.

HIV is NOT transmitted by simple casual contact, such as kissing, sharing water glasses or hugging.

Can I get HIV from a blood transfusion or giving blood?

It's very, very unlikely. The risk of transmitting HIV by a screened blood transfusion in the U.S. is practically nonexistent. Giving blood is also very safe. Needles and syringes for collecting blood are only used once.

How risky is...?

VERY LOW RISK—No reported cases due to these behaviors:

- Fantasy, cyber, or phone sex.
- Using clean sex toys.
- Masturbation, mutual masturbation.
- Touching, massage.
- Erotic massage, body rubbing.
- Kissing.
- Oral sex on a man with a condom.
- Oral sex on a woman with a Glyde® dam or plastic wrap.

LOW RISK—Rare reported cases due to these behaviors, though you should try not to get semen, vaginal fluids, or blood into the mouth or on broken skin:

- Deep kissing (with blood letting).
- Vaginal intercourse with a condom or female condom.
- Anal intercourse with a condom or female condom.
- Oral sex.

HIGH RISK—Millions of reported cases due to these behaviors:

- Vaginal intercourse without a condom.
- Anal intercourse without a condom.

What's the best way to protect myself with sex partners?

- Have each other's consent.
- Never use pressure to get consent.
- Be honest with each other.
- Treat each other as equals.
- Be attentive to each other's pleasure.
- Protect each other against physical and emotional harm.
- Guard against unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infection.
- Be clear with each other about what you want to do and don't want to do.
- Respect each other's limits.
- Accept responsibility for your actions.



How does HIV work?

HIV breaks down the immune system—our body's shield against disease. HIV causes people to become sick with infections that normally wouldn't affect them.

How can I tell if I'm infected with HIV? What are the symptoms?

The only way to know if you are infected is to be tested for HIV infection. You cannot rely on symptoms to know whether or not you are infected with HIV. Many people who are infected with HIV do not have any symptoms at all for many years.

The following **may be** warning signs of infection with HIV:

- Rapid weight loss.
- Dry cough.
- Recurring fever or profuse night sweats.
- Profound and unexplained fatigue.
- Swollen lymph glands in the armpits, groin, or neck.
- Diarrhea that lasts for more than a week.
- White spots or unusual blemishes on the tongue, in the mouth, or in the throat.
- Pneumonia.
- Red, brown, pink, or purplish blotches on or under the skin or inside the mouth, nose, or eyelids.
- Memory loss, depression, and other neurological disorders.

However, no one should assume they are infected if they have any of these symptoms. Each of these symptoms can be related to other illnesses. Again, **the only way to determine whether you are infected is to be tested for HIV infection.**

Similarly, you cannot rely on symptoms to establish that a person has AIDS. **The symptoms of AIDS are similar to the symptoms of many other illnesses.** AIDS is a medical diagnosis made by a doctor based on specific criteria established by the CDC.

Should I be tested?

Testing may be especially right for you if you think that you or your sex partner(s) may be infected and

- You want to slow the progress of the infection by receiving medical treatment.
- You want to become a parent.
- You and your partner know you will have no other partners for a number of years and you want to stop practicing safer sex.
- You want to apply for health insurance, the armed forces, or a government agency that requires testing, and you want to know your status before applying.

You may want counseling before and after testing. If you do, choose a testing site that offers counseling or call **CDC-INFO** 24 Hours/Day at 1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636), 1-888-232-6348 (TTY), in English, en Español.

What about my privacy?

If privacy is important to you, consider being tested “anonymously,” where your name is never matched up with your results.

With “confidential” testing your results are put in a permanent medical record under your name. Some states require doctors and nurses to report the names of those with HIV or AIDS to health officials. They can only do this if your name is attached to your test results.

Where can I get tested for HIV?

Local, state, and federal health departments offer free testing. Some have anonymous HIV counseling and testing sites. Confidential and/or anonymous tests are also available from most physicians, hospitals and health clinics, as well as from Planned Parenthood.

To locate an HIV testing site near you, visit the National HIV Testing Resources web site at <http://www.hivtest.org>. Some testing sites now offer rapid testing that can provide results in less than an hour.

You can also buy an anonymous HIV home test kit in a drugstore or at www.homeaccess.com.



What can a pregnant woman do if she thinks she's been exposed to HIV?

She should consult a health care provider who knows about HIV disease. Without treatment, about 25 percent of babies born to women with HIV are also infected. The use of anti-viral drugs, cesarean delivery, and refraining from breast feeding can reduce the risk of transmission to less than two percent. Children born with HIV, however, often develop AIDS. A pregnant woman with HIV may want to consider whether or not to continue her pregnancy.

What if I have HIV?

- Consult a clinician experienced in treating HIV/AIDS.
- Protect your sex partner(s) from HIV by following safer-sex guidelines.
- Inform sex partner(s) who may also be infected.
- Do not share needles or works.
- Get psychological support with a therapist and/or join a support group for people with HIV.
- Get information and social and legal support from an AIDS service organization.
- Don't share your HIV status with people who do not need to know. Only tell people you can count on for support.
- Maintain a strong immune system with regular medical checkups and a healthy lifestyle:
- Eat well.
- Get enough rest and exercise.
- Avoid illegal and recreational drugs, including alcohol and tobacco.
- Learn how to manage stress effectively.
- Consider using anti-viral therapies that may slow the progress of the infection.

Is AIDS fatal for everyone who has it?

Some people have lived with AIDS for many years. New treatments and increased knowledge may help many more people live with AIDS even longer.

Are there medical treatments for people with HIV disease?

A variety of treatments — combinations of medicines called "cocktails" — offer hope. They are often very expensive and are not available to everyone. They only work for some people and may only work for limited periods of time. While there is increasing hope for people with HIV, there is still no cure.

For additional information about AIDS and HIV

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