



HIV stands for **human immunodeficiency virus**. **AIDS** is **acquired immune deficiency syndrome**. It is caused by HIV. The virus destroys the body's immune system. This leaves a person unable to fight off diseases. The virus also attacks the central nervous system causing mental problems.



**Get more
information
from:**

HealthyLearn®
www.HealthyLearn.com

AIDSinfo
800.HIV.0440 (448.0440)
www.aidsinfo.nih.gov

CDC National AIDS
Hotline (NAH) and
National STD Hotline
800.CDC.INFO
(232.4636)
www.cdc.gov/std

HIV / AIDS

One million people in the U.S. have HIV, but about 25% of them do not know they have it. People ages 15 to 65 are advised to be screened for HIV.

Signs & Symptoms

Many people have no symptoms when first infected with HIV. Within a month or two, some people have flu-like symptoms. These include fever, fatigue, headache, and swollen glands in the neck and groin. These symptoms usually go away within a week to a month. They are often mistaken for other infections.

In adults, symptoms of HIV may take a few months to 10 or more years to appear. In children born with HIV, symptoms appear within 2 years.

Symptoms of HIV Before the Onset of AIDS

- Swollen glands.
- Fatigue. Weight loss.
- Fever and sweating that occur often.
- Skin rashes that persist. Flaky skin.
- Infections. These include herpes, shingles, and yeast infection.
- Short-term memory loss.
- Getting sick often. Slow growth in children.

AIDS is the most advanced stage of HIV. With AIDS, a low level of cells in the blood called T4 cells occurs. Persons with AIDS get many illnesses. These include skin infections, pneumonia, and cancer.

Symptoms of AIDS

- Extreme fatigue. Weight loss.
- Severe and chronic diarrhea.
- Fever. Severe headaches.
- Shortness of breath. Coughing. A hard time swallowing.
- Abdominal cramps. Nausea. Vomiting.
- Lack of coordination. Vision loss.
- Mental status changes. Seizures. Coma.



HIV / AIDS, Continued

Causes

HIV is spread when body fluids, such as semen and blood, pass from an infected person to another person. This includes having unprotected sexual contact and/or sharing drug needles.

Infected females can give HIV to their babies during pregnancy, birth, or breast-feeding. The risk of the baby getting HIV is lowered a great deal if the female takes antiviral medicines during the pregnancy and delivery. The baby takes medicine the first six weeks of life, too.

HIV is **not** spread from donating blood, touching, hugging, or (dry) kissing a person with HIV. A cough, a sneeze, tears, sweat, or using a hot tub, or public restroom **does not** spread HIV either.

Treatment

A rapid oral HIV test and blood tests detect antibodies to HIV. There is no cure for AIDS, but treatment helps the immune system fight HIV, infections, and cancers that can occur with it. Treatment includes medications (often used in multidrug combinations) and treating infections.

Questions to Ask

Have you tested positive for HIV?

NO

YES



Do you have any of these conditions?

- A sexually transmitted infection (STI).
- Persistent yeast infections in the mouth (thrush) or vagina.
- Unprotected sex with a current or past sexual partner that has HIV.

YES



NO

Do you do high risk activities for getting infected with HIV listed on this page? Or, do you want to get tested for HIV for “peace of mind”?

NO



YES



or Health Department for HIV testing

Self-Care / Prevention

- Take medication as prescribed.
- Take steps to reduce the risk of getting infections and diseases. Get enough rest. Eat healthy foods. Take vitamins and minerals as advised by your doctor.
- Get emotional support. Join a support group for persons infected with HIV. Let your family and friends know how they can help you.

To Reduce the Risk for HIV

- Follow **Safer Sex**. (See at www.HealthyLearn.com.)
- Don't have sex with people who are at high risk for HIV:
 - Persons with multiple sex partners or who inject illegal drugs.
 - Partners of persons infected or exposed to HIV.
 - Persons who have had multiple blood transfusions, especially before 1985, unless tested negative for HIV.
- Don't share needles with anyone. Don't have sex with people who use or have injected illegal drugs.
- Don't share personal items that have blood on them, such as razors.

Flowchart continued in next column