

What are HIV and AIDS?

HIV is a virus that impacts a person's immune system. The virus attacks cells that help fight infection. This makes a person with HIV more vulnerable to other infections and diseases.

If untreated, HIV can progress to AIDS. This is a late stage of HIV that happens when a person's immune system is badly damaged because of the virus. HIV and AIDS can make someone very sick and may cause death if untreated.

Learning about HIV can keep you healthy and prevent the spread of the virus.

How does HIV spread?

HIV is spread by contact with certain body fluids of a person with HIV. This includes:

- Sexual contact
- Sharing needles, syringes, or other equipment to inject drugs
- Mother to baby during pregnancy, birth, and breastfeeding (less common)

Ways HIV can't be spread

- Air or water
- Mosquitoes, other insects, or pets
- Saliva, tears, or sweat
- Closed-mouth or "social" kissing
- Shaking hands or hugging
- Drinking fountains or sharing dishes, silverware, or drinking glasses
- Sharing toilets
- Other sexual activities that don't involve exchange of body fluids



Protect yourself from HIV

It is important to get tested if you think you or your sexual partner might have HIV. This will help protect you and keep you healthy.

- Get tested if you are at risk
- Use condoms correctly during anal or vaginal sex
- Limit your number of sex partners
- Don't inject drugs and don't share needles
- Get tested and treated for other sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- Ask your doctor about preventive medications

How Can you Tell if You Have HIV?

You can't rely on symptoms to tell if you have HIV.

Talk to your doctor if you think you have been exposed to HIV. The only way to know for sure is to get tested.

Stay Healthy

There is no cure for HIV, but with medical care, HIV can be controlled. Someone with HIV can live nearly as long as someone without HIV if they receive diagnosis and treatment early. Some ways to keep yourself healthy if you have HIV include:

- Find HIV care and follow a care plan
- Take your HIV medicine as prescribed
- Tell your sex partners you have HIV and use a condom every time you have sex
- Avoid sharing needles and inform anyone you have shared needles with in the past that you have HIV
- Talk to your doctor for more information

hiv.gov/hiv-basics/overview/about-hiv-and-aids/what-are-hiv-and-aids

[.cdc.gov/hiv/basics/whatishiv.html](https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/basics/whatishiv.html)