



HIV Facts



What is HIV?

- Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) causes HIV infection, which can eventually lead to Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS).
- HIV kills white blood cells in the body's immune system. As a result, the body cannot fight off infection.
- In infected people, HIV is found in body fluids that contain blood cells. These body fluids include blood, semen, vaginal fluids, and breast milk.

How is HIV transmitted?

- HIV is transmitted during sexual intercourse with an infected person. This includes vaginal, anal, and oral sex.
- Contact with infected fluids from the penis or vagina can transmit HIV.
- HIV can be transmitted from person to person if they share needles. This can happen when injecting any drugs, getting tattoos, and body piercing. This is more likely to happen if you get a tattoo or body piercing from an unlicensed person.
- An infected mother can give HIV to her baby while pregnant, while giving birth, or when breastfeeding. Treatment of the mother during pregnancy and at birth can greatly reduce the risk of transmission.
- HIV can be transmitted if infected blood or blood products are transfused. In the U.S., this rarely happens anymore because blood donations are now tested for HIV.
- Contact with infected blood can transmit HIV. This can happen with "needlestick" injuries, when a needle or another sharp object accidentally pierces a person's skin. It can also happen when blood splashes into the eyes, nose, or mouth or into open cuts or sores on the skin.
- HIV is not transmitted by saliva, tears, sweat, urine, feces, insect bites, through the air, or from surfaces.

What are symptoms of infection with HIV?

- An infected person might have a flu-like illness a few weeks after being exposed to HIV.
- A person with HIV usually feels well and looks healthy for years after infection, but is able to give HIV to others.
- White blood cells in the immune system are slowly destroyed.
- Once HIV has destroyed many white blood cells, the body cannot fight off infections. Symptoms of illness appear, such as night sweats, weight loss, fever, and diarrhea.
- Sometimes severe symptoms, such as pneumonia or certain cancers, appear. It takes an average of ten years for this to happen.

What are other consequences of infection with HIV?

- A person may be diagnosed with AIDS once the person's white blood cell level is extremely low, or if the person has other infections or conditions due to his or her damaged immune system.
- While a person with AIDS can live a long time, every day people with AIDS die.
- Until there is a cure, HIV is a terminal illness.
- Unfortunately, people living with HIV are sometimes not treated with dignity and respect.



What is the testing, treatment, or cure for HIV?

- Testing is available from your doctor, a clinic, or the local health department.
- HIV infection can be treated, but not cured.
- Treatment works best if it begins as soon as possible after infection.
- A combination of medications can work very well in fighting infections and reducing HIV in the body. However, these medications can cause serious side effects, they are expensive, and they don't always work well for everyone.

How can HIV be avoided?

- Abstain from vaginal, oral, and anal sex.
- Avoid sharing needles for any purpose.
- Avoid blood and other body fluid contact with another person.
- Use "universal precautions" if blood or other body fluids must be handled. Use latex gloves, hand-washing, and careful disposal of gloves and other blood-soaked items. Use these precautions at all times with all people.



If you have questions about HIV or AIDS, call, email, or talk to...

- CDC INFO: 1-800-232-4636 (English and Spanish; available 24/7)
- Hearing impaired hotline: 1-888-232-6348
- CDC e-mail address: cdcinfo@cdc.gov
- Parent or other trusted adult
- Family physician or nurse
- Local Public Health Department
- Local AIDS Hotline

These web sites will also provide accurate information:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): <http://www.cdc.gov/>
- American Social Health Association: <http://www.ashastd.org/>
- Michigan Department of Health and Human Services: www.michigan.gov/hivstd

SIGN AND RETURN THIS PART FOR EXTRA CREDIT.

I discussed two interesting facts about HIV with my parent or another trusted adult.

Student Signature

Adult Signature