

# HIV/AIDS



## WHAT IS HIV/AIDS?

HIV stands for human immunodeficiency virus. If HIV is not treated it can lead to AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome). HIV attacks the immune system, specifically the CD4 cells or T cells, which help the immune system fight off infections. If left untreated, HIV will destroy T cells until the body is too weak to fight off infections and infection-related cancers. Once this occurs, the person now has AIDS the final stage of HIV.

## HOW DO YOU GET HIV/AIDS?

HIV is only transmitted from an infected person to another person through direct contact with the following bodily fluids: blood (including menstrual blood), semen/cum/pre-cum/ejaculate, vaginal secretions, and breast milk.

### **HIV in bodily fluids are transmitted through the following:**

- Vaginal or anal intercourse with someone who has HIV without using a condom or without taking medication that prevents HIV infection.
- Sharing of needles or syringes used to inject drugs with someone who is HIV positive. HIV can live in used needles or syringes for up to 42 days depending on temperature and other factors.
- Less commonly, from mother to child during childbirth or breastfeeding.
- Less commonly, through oral sex.

## HIV TESTING

The only way to know if you are HIV negative is through testing. You can get HIV testing through your health care provider, medical clinics, substance abuse programs, community health centers, and hospitals. If you would like to find a testing site near you call 1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636), visit [gettested.cdc.gov](http://gettested.cdc.gov) or text your zip code to KNOW IT (566948). Also, home testing kits are available for purchase at a pharmacy or online.



## WHY IS TESTING AND TREATMENT IMPORTANT?

There are over 1.2 million people living with HIV in the United States. Of those infected, 1 in 8 people are unaware of their HIV status. Knowing your HIV status is important for your health, your relationships, your life and your future.



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## HIV PREVENTION

You can reduce your risk of contracting HIV by:

- Practice abstinence. Abstaining from sex is 100% effective at preventing HIV infection.
- Getting tested and knowing your partner's HIV status.
- Use condoms correctly whenever you have vaginal, anal, or oral sex.
- Limit your number of sex partners, the more partners you have the greater chance you may have a partner who has HIV.
- If you believe you are at high risk of contracting HIV, talk to your health care provider about pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP). PrEP is a pill taken daily to lower the chance of HIV infection by over 90% through sex and by over 70% through injection drug use.
- Do not inject drugs. If you are an injection drug user, only use sterile drug equipment and water. Never share needles with anyone.

## HIV TREATMENT



HIV is treated using a combination of medicines to fight HIV infection. This is called antiretroviral therapy (ART). ART is not a cure, but it can regulate the virus so that HIV positive individuals can live a longer, healthier life and decrease the risk of transmitting HIV to others. ART

is a combination of HIV medicines that must be taken daily and as exactly as prescribed. These HIV medicines prevent HIV from multiplying, which reduces the amount of HIV in your body. ART is recommended for all people with HIV, regardless of how long they've had the virus or how healthy they are. If HIV is left untreated, it will attack the immune system and eventually progress to AIDS.

### Reference:

"What Is HIV/AIDS?". Aids.gov. N.p., 2016. <https://www.aids.gov/hiv-aids-basics/hiv-aids-101/what-is-hiv-aids/>

"How Is HIV / AIDS Transmitted? -San Francisco AIDS Foundation". San Francisco AIDS Foundation. N.p., 2016. <http://sfaf.org/hiv-info/basics/how-is-hiv-transmitted.html>

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## Testing

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