

HIV & AIDS

(Human Immunodeficiency Virus & Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome)

HIV is a virus that weakens the immune system decreasing the body's ability to fight off infections.

AIDS is a result of an untreated HIV infection.

Frequent Signs & Symptoms

There are often NO signs / symptoms, or symptoms go unnoticed. There are typically 3 stages of infection.

Early symptoms (may occur 2-4 weeks after becoming infected) may include flu-like symptoms such as:

- Fever, fatigue, body aches
- Cough, sore throat, mouth sores
- Headache
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Night sweats, chills
- Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea,
- Unexplained weight loss

The second stage generally does not produce any symptoms.

Stage 3 is progression into AIDS. At this stage the immune system is severely damaged leading to opportunistic (taking the opportunity to attack while your immune system is weak) infections and cancers.

Causes

HIV is passed from one person to another through body fluids such as blood, semen, and vaginal fluid. It can be passed during sexual intercourse. You can become infected by having vaginal, anal, or oral intercourse with a partner who has the virus. Infection can occur even if your partner does not have symptoms. Contracting other STDs can increase your risk of contracting HIV.

HIV can also be spread from mother to child during pregnancy, child birth, or breast feeding.

AIDS is a result of untreated HIV infection.

You cannot contract HIV through normal daily contact such as shaking hands, hugging, kissing or sharing restroom facilities. You also cannot contract it through air, water, or insect bites.

Additional Information: _____

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Doc Bryan Student Services Center,
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Prevention

The only way to avoid contracting HIV is to not come in contact with bodily fluids. Avoid IV drug use and sharing needles. Health care providers should always practice Standard Precautions with all patients. Avoid all vaginal, anal, or oral intercourse (abstinence).

If you are sexually active, ways to reduce your risk include:

- Maintaining a mutually monogamous relationship with a partner who is not infected.
- Using condoms the right way EVERY time you have sex. This includes condoms with oral intercourse.

Diagnosis

Your health care provider will need to do an exam and obtain a sexual health history. The only way to know for sure is to get tested. It can take anywhere from 1-6 months after exposure for tests to show positive results so repeat testing would need to be done if you have been exposed to someone who is HIV positive or you are at high risk.

Treatment

There is no cure for HIV or AIDS. Medications can help reduce symptoms and keep HIV from progressing to AIDS. Medications can also help reduce the risk of transmission. If you have tested positive, you and your provider and possibly the local health department will develop an extensive treatment plan. All sexual partners will need to be notified and tested.

Activity

Have an open and honest discussion with any partners and health care providers about your diagnosis. Condoms and medications can reduce the risk of transmission but cannot eliminate the risk. You should have routine testing at least once a year if you are sexually active. Routine testing should be more often if you are high risk such as unprotected sexual activity, multiple partners, or IV drug use.

Complications

If left untreated/undiagnosed, HIV can typically progress to AIDS in about 8- 10 years. If left untreated you are more likely to develop serious infections and/or cancers.