



BASIC INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is a virus that gradually destroys the body's ability to fight infection and certain cancers. Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) is a secondary immunodeficiency syndrome resulting from HIV infection.

FREQUENT SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

- HIV infection may produce no symptoms.
- Early symptoms clear up on their own and may include: fatigue, sore throat, fever, nausea/vomiting, swollen glands, muscle ache, headache, and joint pain.
- HIV symptoms may recur after several years: swollen and sore lymph glands, fatigue, chills, fever, night sweats, persistent headache, unexplained weight loss, diarrhea, cough, white coating on tongue (thrush), or persistent vaginal yeast infections.
- In later stages, multiple symptoms can develop.

CAUSES

HIV is a virus that invades and destroys cells of the body's immune system. It is passed from person to person via body fluids (blood, semen, and vaginal fluid).

RISK INCREASES WITH

- Sexual contact with HIV-infected person.
- Having high-risk partners (e.g., has sex with other men, has multiple sex partners, or injects drugs).
- Having unprotected sex with multiple partners.
- Contaminated needles used by IV drug abusers.
- Children born to an HIV-infected mother.
- Having a sexually transmitted disease (STD).
- Note: a person with HIV infection is not a risk for spreading the infection to the general population.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Abstain from sex or have sex with only one person who is known to be free of HIV.
- Avoid sexual contact with HIV-affected persons or known IV drug users.
- Use a new latex (or polyurethane) condom for each act of vaginal, anal, or oral intercourse if partner has unknown HIV status.
- Avoid IV drugs. Do not share needles.
- Avoid untested blood products in other countries.
- Health care professionals need to use safety procedures for handling needles and blood products.
- If you are HIV-positive: always advise your sexual partners and health care providers, practice safe sex, don't donate blood or organs, don't share certain items (needles or syringes, razor, or toothbrush).
- Early diagnosis is helpful. If you are at risk, obtain a medical test even if you feel well. If you plan to be, or are pregnant, HIV testing can be helpful.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

There is no cure and the outcome will vary for each person. With proper treatment, many patients are living longer and with basically good health.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

Serious infections, cancer, or death.



DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

- Your health care provider will do a physical exam and ask questions about your sexual history. Medical tests may include routine blood studies and an HIV antibody blood test. It takes 1 to 3 months (sometimes up to 6 months) after HIV exposure for antibodies to be detected in the blood. Tests for other sexually transmitted diseases and infections are usually done.
- Treatment includes drug therapy and self-care. Hospital care may be needed for complications.
- Advise past/present sexual partners to get HIV tests.
- Counseling helps a person cope with having HIV.
- Get regular medical and dental check-ups. Tell any health care provider you consult that you have HIV.
- Avoid exposure to people with infections.
- Join a support group.
- To learn more: National AIDS Hotline: (800) 342-2437; website: www.cdc.gov/hiv.

MEDICATION

Drugs to treat HIV and AIDS, and drugs to treat infections or complications will be prescribed.

ACTIVITY

Fatigue or infections can limit some activities. Get the rest you need, but try to exercise to the extent possible.

DIET

Poor eating habits, changes in metabolism, and weight loss may develop. Consult a dietitian for advice on diet.



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has symptoms of HIV or want to be tested for HIV.
- Infections occur after diagnosis. Symptoms include fever, cough, and diarrhea. New symptoms develop. Drugs used in treatment have many side effects.

Special notes:

More notes on the back of this page ☐