

What Is HIV?

HIV is the virus that causes AIDS. People who have HIV in their bodies have HIV infection, or HIV.

People may not know they have it.

- HIV is a disease with many stages. People with HIV may have no symptoms, a few symptoms or many serious symptoms.
- People can have HIV for many years without feeling or looking sick. They may not even know they have HIV. But they can still pass the virus on to others.

HIV hurts the body.

- Over time, HIV damages the body's immune system. The immune system protects the body from disease.
- When the immune system gets very weak, other diseases and infections can enter the body. This stage of HIV is called AIDS.



Protecting myself is easier now that I understand how HIV works.

How Do People Get HIV?

HIV lives in semen, vaginal fluids, blood and breast milk of a person with HIV. It can be passed from one person to another through these infected fluids.

HIV can be passed:

- During vaginal, oral & anal sex
- While sharing needles and equipment to inject drugs
- By needles used for tattoos and piercing or to inject vitamins or steroids
- From a mother to her baby during pregnancy, childbirth or breastfeeding
- From needle-stick injuries to health workers caring for people with HIV

HIV is not passed by:

- Donating blood
- Hugging, kissing or sharing food
- Telephones, toilet seats, towels or eating utensils
- Tears, saliva, sweat or urine
- Mosquitoes or other insects

Before 1985, some people got HIV from infected blood transfusions. Now the blood supply in the United States is tested. So the chances of getting HIV this way are very, very small.

HIV Facts

Protect Yourself!

- Use a new latex condom and a water-based lubricant every time for vaginal or anal sex.
- Don't use oil-based lubricants. Hand creams, massage oils, Vaseline, etc., can cause the condom to break.
- For oral sex on a man, use a new latex condom every time.
- For oral sex on a woman or oral/anal sex on a man or woman, use a barrier such as a dental dam, a latex condom cut and rolled out flat, or plastic food wrap. Use a new barrier each time.
- People who are allergic to latex can use plastic (polyurethane) condoms. These come in both male and female styles.
- Don't have sex when you're drunk or high. Using alcohol or other drugs affects judgment and can lead to unsafe sex.



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Scan with smartphone to watch a video on how to use a condom.



1-800-321-4407
www.etr.org/store
A nonprofit organization

Title No. H196

How Do People Get HIV?

Sex



I won't have sex without a condom. My life is too important to gamble with.

How It Happens

- HIV in semen, blood or vaginal fluids passes between partners through the thin mucous membranes of the penis, vagina, rectum or mouth, or through tiny cuts or open sores in these areas.
- This can happen during vaginal, anal or oral sex.

Protect Yourself

- **Don't have sex.** This is called abstinence. Abstinence is the surest way to prevent sexual transmission of HIV.
- **Be monogamous.** This means have sex only with one partner who does not have HIV and who only has sex with you.
- **Practice safer sex.** This means don't allow a sex partner's semen, blood, menstrual blood or vaginal secretions to enter your body. (See back panel for safer sex guidelines.)

Sharing Needles



I went to get a tattoo, but the place didn't seem clean so I changed my mind. It just wasn't worth the risk.

How It Happens

- Needle is shared to inject drugs, vitamins or steroids, or for tattoos or piercing.
- Blood with HIV in it is left in the needle or syringe.
- When the equipment is used again, HIV in blood is injected directly into the next person's body.

Protect Yourself

- **Don't share needles** for any reason.
- **Don't inject drugs.**
- If you inject drugs, **don't share needles** or works. Find out if there's a needle exchange program in your area. Trade your used points for new ones.
- If you share, **clean works** at least 3 times with water, 3 times with bleach and 3 times again with water before and after each use.

What Is Your Risk?

You are at risk if you:

- Have had sex with a man or woman who has had other partners.
- Have shared needles to inject drugs or for any other reason, or had sex with someone who has.

You are probably not at risk if you:

- Haven't had sex, or have only had sex with one partner who doesn't have HIV and who's only had sex with you.
- Haven't shared needles to inject drugs or for any other reason, and haven't had sex with anyone who has.



We talked about risks and agreed to use condoms whenever we have sex.

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The HIV Test

The HIV test looks for HIV antibodies in your body.

If you have antibodies:

- Your test results will be positive. This means you have HIV.

If you don't have antibodies:

- Your test will be negative. This means one of two things:
 - You don't have HIV.
 - You have HIV, but your body hasn't made antibodies yet.

It usually takes 2 to 8 weeks after infection for the body to make HIV antibodies. In rare cases, it can take up to 6 months.

What happens in testing?

- A health care worker takes a little blood from your arm or finger, wipes the inside of your cheek or gums with a cotton swab, or asks for a urine sample.
- Many test centers offer a quick test. Results take 20 to 30 minutes. Positive results must be confirmed with a second test, with results in about 2 weeks.
- Other places send the sample to a lab. In about 2 weeks, you go back to get the results.
- Most test centers provide counseling to help you understand the results and learn how to prevent HIV.

What Test Results Mean

Who will know your results?

- Most test centers offer confidential testing. Your test result is told only to you but it is also put into your medical file. No one can see it without your signed approval.
- Some centers offer anonymous testing. You are the only one who sees your test result. You use a code name or number to get your result.
- Home testing is anonymous. HIV antibody home testing kits can be purchased at a pharmacy.
 - You mail a blood sample for testing, along with a code name or number.
 - Results are given by phone when you call and give your code.

If you test positive:

- A confirmed positive test means you have HIV. Positive results are almost 100% accurate.
- If you test HIV positive, find a health care provider who knows about HIV right away. Early treatment can help you stay healthy longer.
- Services for people with HIV include help with health care, income, food and legal services.

If you test negative:

- A negative test means no HIV antibodies were in your body at the time of the test.
- This may mean you don't have HIV.
- A negative test might also mean you have HIV, but your body hasn't made HIV antibodies yet.
- Get tested again 3 to 6 months after any risky behavior.

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The only way to know for sure if you have HIV is to get tested.



I got tested. Now I don't take chances anymore.

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From Mother to Fetus or Newborn

I got tested when I found out I was pregnant. Now I don't worry about my baby getting sick.



How It Happens

- Blood with HIV in it may pass from mother to fetus in the womb or to baby at birth.
- HIV may pass to baby in breast milk.

Protect Yourself

- **Consider taking the HIV test** if you are pregnant or thinking about getting pregnant, and you, a sex partner or someone you share needles with might be at risk.
- Pregnant women who test positive can **take medication** to greatly reduce the risk to the fetus.

Blood-to-Blood Contact

I work as a nurse down at the emergency room. We use protective equipment and follow hospital guidelines to avoid HIV.



How It Happens

- Blood with HIV in it comes into contact with blood or mucous membranes of another person.
- Very rarely, this could happen from a blood transfusion or organ transplant.

Protect Yourself

- **Avoid contact with someone else's blood.**
- Blood and organs donated for transplant and semen at sperm banks are all **tested for HIV.**
- You may be able to **donate your own blood** ahead of time for any planned surgeries.