

# HIV & AIDS

**THERE IS NO CURE FOR HIV/AIDS. THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT IF TREATED EARLY PEOPLE WITH HIV/AIDS CAN LIVE LONG HEALTHY LIVES.**

## WHAT IS HIV?

HIV is a virus that attacks the cells in your body's immune system. Because your immune system normally defends your body against illness, HIV makes it difficult for your body to fight off diseases and infections.

HIV can be passed on during unprotected vaginal, oral, and anal sex, through sharing needles or syringes, and from an HIV positive mother to her child during pregnancy, birth, or breast feeding. People who have HIV often show no symptoms, which is why HIV positive people may spread the infection without knowing it.

## WHAT IS AIDS?

AIDS is an advanced stage of HIV. There are two ways doctors decide if an HIV positive person has AIDS:

1. *Based on infections*- When an HIV positive person gets one or more infections that do not usually affect someone who is healthy.
2. *Based on blood tests*- When the number of healthy immune cells in an HIV positive person drops to a certain low point, or when the amount of HIV in their blood reaches a certain high point.



***How quickly someone with HIV advances to AIDS depends on many different factors. One important factor is how quickly a person gets tested and gets into care.***

1 in 5 people with HIV...

don't know they are infected.



That's why it's so important to get tested, learn your status, and get treated if you learn you are HIV positive. Treatments for HIV have improved significantly, and many people who receive treatment early live long healthy lives.

If you are HIV positive, your healthcare provider can teach you how to care for yourself and will provide you with information on different treatment options.

## DO I HAVE HIV?

The only way to know for sure if you have HIV is to get tested. Getting tested is easy. To test you for HIV your healthcare provider will collect either a blood sample or a swab from your mouth. These tests should not hurt, but if you experience any discomfort tell your provider.

## HIV & AIDS continued...



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### WHAT IF I TEST POSITIVE FOR HIV?

Fortunately, with the availability of different treatments today, you can lead a long and healthy life as an HIV positive person.

If you've tested positive, see a doctor who has experience treating HIV even if you don't feel sick, find a support system that can help you cope with the emotional challenges ahead, talk with your partners about your status, and learn how to reduce the risk of passing on HIV by using latex condoms and dental dams.

### HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

#### Get Educated

*For vaginal and anal sex:* Learn how to use latex condoms the right way, and use them every time. They're the only way to prevent STDs during vaginal and anal sex.

*For oral sex:* Use condoms for oral sex on a penis, and dental dams for oral sex on a vagina or anus.

*For fingering, hand jobs, and other intimate touching:* Wash your hands with soap and water after touching your partner's genitals before touching your own (and vice versa). To be extra safe, some people choose to use latex gloves. Find what works for you.

#### Get Tested

Get tested with your partner, and discuss how you will have safer sex if one or both of you are infected. Ask to be tested if you learn that you are pregnant. This is an important step to protecting your baby's health.

#### Be Smart

Have sex with only one partner, who has been tested and is not infected, and who is only having sex with you.

#### Stay Clear

Avoid drinking alcohol and doing drugs before you have sex. It's difficult to make good decisions when under the influence.

### HOW OFTEN SHOULD I GET TESTED?

Young people who are sexually active should get tested at least once a year. It's also smart to get tested before you start a new sexual relationship, or if someone you've had sex with tells you that they are HIV positive. It's easy. Just ask your healthcare provider.

### WHAT DOESN'T WORK

- "Pulling out" before a man ejaculates into the vagina or anus
- Birth control (it only reduces risk for pregnancy)
- Washing your genitals, peeing, or douching after sex

### FOR MORE INFORMATION ON HIV/AIDS

- [www.itsyoursexlife.com/gyt/know](http://www.itsyoursexlife.com/gyt/know)
- [www.plannedparenthood.org](http://www.plannedparenthood.org)
- [www.weRnative.org](http://www.weRnative.org)

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