



HIV/AIDS



What is HIV?

The Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) damages cells in the immune (defense) system that helps to protect the body by fighting off infection and disease. As the virus gradually destroys these cells, the immune system becomes unable to protect against illness.

What is AIDS?

Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is the last stage of HIV infection. AIDS is caused by HIV, which weakens the immune system over a period of time. However, a positive HIV test result does NOT mean that a person has AIDS. A diagnosis of AIDS is made on the basis of the person's symptoms and results of lab tests; CD4 (immune cell) counts, viral load counts, etc).

How is HIV spread?

Exposure to HIV infected blood, semen, or vaginal fluids can put you at risk. This includes having unprotected anal, oral or vaginal sex and/or sharing needles or drug works. You can't tell by looking at a person if they have HIV. An infected woman can spread the virus to her baby during pregnancy, delivery or through breast milk. However, with proper treatment during pregnancy, the chance of passing the virus from the mother to the newborn baby is greatly reduced.

You cannot get HIV virus from:

- Casual contact with people infected with HIV (i.e. talking or hugging)
- Tears, saliva, or sweat of an HIV infected person
- Handling objects that have been touched by someone who has HIV or AIDS
- Air or water
- Mosquito bites

What are the symptoms of HIV/AIDS?

Most people do not feel ill due to HIV for an average of 8 to 10 years after being infected with the virus.

The following symptoms can be caused by HIV or other illnesses:

- Constant tiredness
- Persistent fever
- Swollen glands
- A dry, nagging cough and/or shortness of breath
- Continued loss of appetite
- Significant weight loss without dieting
- Diarrhea that won't go away
- Sores or rashes that won't go away
- Chronic yeast infections
- Night sweats
- Changes in memory or vision
- Unusual or persistent infections

How is HIV/AIDS treated?

Today there are medical treatments that can slow down the rate at which HIV weakens the immune system. There are also treatments that can prevent or cure some of the illnesses associated with AIDS. The new medical regimens have overall, prolonged the lives of people with HIV and improved their quality of life. Early detection offers more options for treatment and preventive care.

Who should be tested for HIV/AIDS?

- If you have ever shared needles for injecting drugs
- If you know or suspect that your sex partner(s) have had multiple partners, used injection drugs, or had sex with prostitutes
- If you or your sex partner (s) have had a sexually transmitted disease (STD)
- If you have hemophilia or have had sex without a condom with a person with hemophilia
- If you have had a needle stick or other blood product exposure



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Who should be tested for HIV/AIDS, cont.?

- If you have had anal, vaginal or oral sex without a condom
- If you have had sex with a prostitute or if you have more than one sexual partner
- If you have had a blood transfusion between January 1978 and June 1985
- If you are pregnant (it is best to be tested before getting pregnant, if you have any of the above risks)

How is HIV prevented?

- Use a new, latex condom with a water-based lubricant every time you have sex. Condoms don't offer 100% protection but they do offer the best protection available.
- Have sex with only one person who is having sex only with you. The more partners you have the greater the likelihood of getting HIV or other STDs.
- Know your sex partner's history of STDs and drug use.
- Have regular STD exams and HIV tests if you are sexually active.
- Know your HIV status and the status of your partner(s). Consider being tested before having sex.
- Remember, you won't automatically be tested for HIV when you go for a medical exam. Ask to be tested if you're at risk.
- If you are a health care worker, follow routine barrier precautions, and handle needles and other sharps safely.
- Don't share needles, toothbrushes, eating utensils or razors that could be contaminated with blood or body fluids.
- Don't shoot drugs. If you do shoot drugs, stop and get into a treatment program. If you can't stop, NEVER reuse or share your drug works.
- If you are thinking about getting a tattoo or body piercing, remember that you can get infected if the tools haven't been cleaned properly, or if the artist doesn't wear clean gloves with each new customer.

Where can I get tested for HIV?

Your physician's office, or you can be tested free of charge at the Jackson County Health Department 1715 Lansing Ave., Suite 221 Jackson, MI 49202 Call (517) 788-4477 for more information.

*Jackson County Health Department
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Jackson, MI 49202
(517) 788-4420*

www.mijackson.org



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CDC Public Information

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