

HIV FACT SHEET

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What is HIV?

HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) is a treatable but not curable disease virus that attacks the body's immune system and, if left untreated, can develop into AIDS which is a late stage HIV infection.

How does it spread?

You can get HIV by having vaginal, anal, or oral (less common) sex with someone who has HIV, in addition to sharing needles and blood transfusions. Additionally, a pregnant person with untreated HIV can transfer the infection to their baby during pregnancy, childbirth, and breast/chest feeding.

Signs and Symptoms

- Many individuals experience symptoms from HIV infection. Most individuals will experience flu-like symptoms within 2–4 weeks after their initial infection and those symptoms can last for days to several weeks. Symptoms can include:
 - Sore throat;
 - Fever;
 - Night sweats;
 - Skin rash;
 - Swollen lymph nodes;
 - Muscle aches; and
 - Mouth ulcers
- Other illnesses can cause similar symptoms and some people have no symptoms at all – the only way to know if you are positive for HIV is to get tested.

Test Options

- While HIV tests are very accurate, there is no test that can detect the virus immediately after infection – how soon a test can detect the virus will depend on the test type, of which there are 3: antibody tests, antigen/antibody tests, and nucleic acid tests (NAT):
 - Antibody tests: these tests look for HIV antibodies in a person's blood or oral fluid – these tests typically can take 23 to 90 days to detect HIV after exposure.
 - Antigen/antibody tests: these tests look for both the antibodies and antigens in a person's blood – these tests typically can detect HIV 18 to 45 days after exposure (the rapid antigen test can take 18 to 90 days after exposure).
 - NAT tests: these tests look for the actual virus in the blood and are usually used for individuals who have had a recent exposure with or without symptoms that have tested negative with an antibody or antigen/antibody test – these tests typically can detect HIV 10 to 33 days after exposure.

Treatment Options

HIV infection can be treated, but not cured. Taking anti-HIV drugs (pills or shots) can help people with HIV infection stay healthy for a long time, potentially avoiding the virus transition to AIDS, and can decrease the chance of passing the virus to other individuals.