

HIV

1. What is HIV?

HIV stands for human immunodeficiency virus. It is a virus that weakens the immune system by destroying important white blood cells that fight disease and infection. HIV is the virus that can lead to AIDS.

2. What is AIDS?

AIDS stands for acquired immune deficiency syndrome. AIDS is the final stage of HIV infection. Having AIDS means that the virus has weakened the immune system to the point at which the body has a difficult time fighting infections.

3. How is HIV spread?

HIV is transmitted through blood, sexual fluids, and breast milk. The two main ways that people get HIV are through unprotected sexual contact and sharing needles with someone who has HIV. If you are pregnant and have HIV, you can give it to your baby before or during birth, or when you breastfeed.

The common ways that HIV is spread include:

- Having unprotected sexual activity with an infected person.
- Sharing needles or syringes used for injecting drugs, medications, tattooing or body piercing with someone who has HIV.

Less common ways that HIV is spread include:

- From mother to child during pregnancy, childbirth, or breastfeeding.
- Being stuck with an HIV-contaminated needle or other sharp object.

4. Can I get HIV through casual contact?

HIV is **NOT** transmitted by casual contact including:

- Touching, talking, or sharing a home with a person who is HIV positive or has AIDS
- Sharing utensils, such as forks, knives, or spoons
- Using swimming pools, hot tubs, drinking fountains, toilet seats, tanning beds, doorknobs, gym equipment, or telephones used by people with HIV/AIDS
- Having someone with HIV/AIDS hug, kiss, sneeze, cough, breathe, sweat, or cry on you
- Being bitten by mosquitos
- Donating blood



Key Points:

- HIV stands for **H**uman **I**mmunodeficiency **V**irus.
- HIV weakens a person's immune system.
- HIV is the virus that can lead to AIDS.
- No effective cure exists for HIV.

For more information:

**Los Angeles County
Department of Public Health**
<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/dhsp/HIVinfo.htm>

**Centers for Disease Control and
Prevention**
<https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/basics/index.html>

HIV

5. Is there a treatment for HIV?

There is no cure for HIV, but with proper medical care, HIV can be controlled. Today, people who become infected with HIV and treated before the disease becomes advanced can live nearly as long as someone who does not have HIV.

6. How will I know if I am infected with HIV?

People infected with HIV often do not have any symptoms. The only way to know if you are infected with HIV is to be tested.

7. If my test comes back positive for HIV, what should I do?

Contact your healthcare provider who will either begin treatment for HIV or refer you to someone who specializes in the treatment of HIV.