

# Fact Sheet: HIV / AIDS

## What is HIV?

The Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) damages cells in the immune (defense) system that helps to protect us 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 counts, viral load counts).

## What are the symptoms?

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
- A large 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 it spread?

Getting HIV infected blood, semen, or vaginal fluids into your body in any way can put you at risk. This includes having unprotected anal, oral or vaginal sex and 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 the chance of passing the virus from the mother to the newborn baby is greatly reduced.

## You cannot get the virus from:

- Casual contact with people who have HIV
- Tears or saliva
- Handling objects that have been touched by someone who has the virus
- Donating blood
- Mosquito bites

## How is it treated?

Today there are medical treatments that can slow down the rate at which HIV weakens the immune system and reduce the amount of virus in someone infected with HIV. There are also treatments that can prevent or cure some of the illnesses associated with AIDS. The new medical treatments have, prolonged the lives of people with HIV and improved their quality of life. **Early detection** offers more options for treatment and preventive care. Unfortunately, HIV and AIDS are not curable.



## Who should be tested?

- If you have ever shared needles for injecting drugs
- If you know or suspect that your sex partner(s) has 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
- If you have had anal, vaginal or oral sex without a condom
- 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)
- If you have had sex with a prostitute or if you have more than one sexual partner

## Where can I get tested?

You can be tested free of charge at the:

Washtenaw County Public Health Department  
Adult Clinic Suite 1103  
555 Towner St.  
Ypsilanti, MI 48198

**Testing is by appointment ONLY.  
Call (734) 544-6840 to schedule an  
appointment or for more information.**

- Anonymous testing is available.
- All tests are confidential.
- Rapid testing is available.

Other community sites offer HIV testing or you can talk with your own health care provider.

## 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 we have.
- 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. Contact your local health department for more information on cleaning your works, and about needle exchange programs.
- 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.

*This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information contact your health care provider or visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).*



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