

# HIV and AIDS

## 1. What is HIV?

HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) is a virus that attacks the body's immune system. If HIV is not treated, it can lead to AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome). Currently there is no effective cure for HIV so once people get HIV, they have it for life. With proper medical care, HIV can be controlled and people with HIV can live long, healthy lives and protect their partners.

## 2. How does HIV spread?

You can get HIV by having unprotected sex, sharing needles, syringes, or other drug injection equipment, and it can be passed from mother to child. HIV can be spread through 5 different body fluids: blood, semen or pre-cum, rectal fluids, vaginal fluids, and breast milk.

You cannot get HIV from a person by hugging, closed mouth kissing, or sharing food or drinks with someone who has HIV. Studies have also shown that people with HIV on effective treatment cannot pass HIV to others during sex.

## 3. What are the symptoms of HIV?

Some people can have flu-like symptoms about 2 to 4 weeks after HIV infection. Symptoms can last a few days or several weeks and the most common symptoms include fever, swollen lymph nodes, sore throat, rash, and body aches.

Not everyone will have symptoms and these symptoms can also be caused by other illnesses. If you have these symptoms and you think you may have been exposed to HIV, get tested. Anyone 12 years and older can get an HIV test. All County clinics have HIV testing available. Call 211 or visit [gettested.cdc.gov](http://gettested.cdc.gov) to find a clinic near you.

## 4. How can you prevent the spread of HIV?

You can protect yourself from HIV infection by:

- Using barriers methods like condoms and dental dams.
- Using clean needle equipment.
- Getting tested regularly.
- Taking medicine like PEP or PrEP. Talk to a doctor to find out if this is a good option for you.

If you become HIV positive, get treatment as soon as possible to lower the amount of HIV in your body (viral load). When your viral load is low enough, it cannot be found (undetectable) on an HIV test and cannot spread to others during sex (untransmittable). This is known as Undetectable = Untransmittable or U=U for short.



### Key Points:

- HIV is spread by sexual contact, sharing needles, and from mother to baby
- Visit [gettested.cdc.gov](http://gettested.cdc.gov) to find the nearest place to get tested
- Get tested, use condoms, avoid sharing needles, and talk to your doctor about taking medicine to prevent HIV

### For more information:

Los Angeles County,  
Department of Public Health  
<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/>

California Department of  
Public Health  
[www.cdph.ca.gov/hiv](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/hiv)

Centers for Disease Control and  
Prevention (CDC)  
[www.cdc.gov/hiv](http://www.cdc.gov/hiv)

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