

HIV/AIDS

Morehouse School of Medicine



Prevention Research Center

WHAT IS HIV/AIDS?

HIV stands for human immunodeficiency virus. If HIV is not treated it can lead to AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome).

HIV attacks the immune system, specifically the CD4 cells or T cells, which help the immune system fight off infections. If left untreated, HIV will destroy T cells until the body is too weak to fight off infections and infection-related cancers. Once this occurs, the person now has AIDS the final stage of HIV.

HOW DO YOU GET HIV/AIDS?

HIV is only transmitted from an infected person to another person through direct contact with the following bodily fluids: blood (including menstrual blood), semen/cum/pre-cum/ejaculate, vaginal secretions, and breast milk.

HIV in bodily fluids are transmitted through the following:

- Vaginal or anal intercourse with someone who has HIV without using a condom or without taking medication that prevents HIV infection.
- Sharing of needles or syringes used to inject drugs with someone who is HIV positive. HIV can live in used needles or syringes for up to 42 days depending on temperature and other factors.
- Less commonly, from mother to child during childbirth or breastfeeding.
- Less commonly, through oral sex.

HIV TESTING

The only way to know if you are HIV negative is through testing. You can get HIV testing through your health care provider, medical clinics, substance abuse programs, community health centers, and hospitals. If you would like to find a testing site near you call 1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636), visit gettested.cdc.gov or text your zip code to KNOW IT (566948). Also, home testing kits are available for purchase at a pharmacy or online.



WHY IS TESTING AND TREATMENT IMPORTANT?

There are over 1.2 million people living with HIV in the United States. Of those infected, 1 in 8 people are unaware of their HIV status. Knowing your HIV status is important for your health, your relationships, your life and your future.



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