

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)
Facts and Options to Reduce Risk
ARNG Office of the Chief Surgeon
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What is HIV/AIDS?

HIV is the human immunodeficiency virus that can lead to acquired immune deficiency syndrome, or **AIDS**. The CDC estimates that more than one million people are living with HIV in the US and one in five of those people do not know that they have it.

HIV damages a person's body by destroying specific blood cells, called CD4+ T cells, which are crucial to helping the body fight diseases.

Within a few weeks of being infected with HIV, some people develop flu-like symptoms that last for a week or two, but others have no symptoms at all. People living with HIV may appear and feel healthy for several years. However, even if they feel healthy, HIV is still affecting their bodies. All people with HIV should be seen on a regular basis by a health care provider experienced with treating HIV infection. New medications can limit or slow down the destruction of the immune system, improve the health of people living with HIV, and may reduce their ability to transmit HIV.

AIDS is the late stage of HIV infection, when a person's immune system is severely damaged and has difficulty fighting diseases and certain cancers. Currently, people can live a long time—even decades - with HIV before they develop AIDS. This is because of "highly active" combinations of newer medications.

How do I prevent HIV/AIDS?

Refraining from having sexual intercourse (vaginal, anal, or oral) is the only way with 100% certainty to prevent HIV/AIDS. However, if you choose to have sex there are ways to reduce the risk of getting HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

- There is no risk of transmission for people in long-term monogamous relationships where neither partner is infected.
- The correct and consistent use of latex or polyurethane condoms during sexual intercourse can greatly reduce a person's risk of getting or transmitting HIV and other STI's. Other forms of birth control such as birth control pills, diaphragms, and IUD's do not prevent HIV and other STI's.
- Reduce the number of sexual partners.
- Avoid having sex with people who trade sex for money or drugs or people who share needles. These people are at high risk for HIV and other STI's.
- Do not share needles. HIV can be spread whenever needles are contaminated with blood. This includes needles used for illegal drugs, steroids, tattooing, or body piercing.
- Stay Sober. Use of drugs or alcohol can affect sexual behavior because of reduced inhibitions and clouded judgment. Stay in control – Stay Sober.

For More Information:

<http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/resources/>

<http://www.hooah4health.com/prevention/disease/stdawareness/HIV.htm>