



How to Protect Yourself from Getting HIV Through Sex

If you're at risk of getting HIV through sex, it's important to take steps to protect yourself. The good news is there's a lot you can do to lower your risk.

Am I at risk of getting HIV through sex?

You may be at risk of getting HIV through sex if you:

- Have sex with someone who has HIV
- Don't know if your partner has HIV
- Don't always use a condom and have more than 1 partner
- Don't always use a condom and have a partner who has sex with other people
- Were diagnosed with an STD (sexually transmitted disease) in the last 6 months

To learn more about how HIV spreads, visit

[cdc.gov/hiv/basics/hiv-transmission/ways-people-get-hiv.html](https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/basics/hiv-transmission/ways-people-get-hiv.html).

If you're at risk of getting HIV through sex, talk with your doctor about steps you can take to protect yourself.

Can I get HIV through oral sex?

You have little to no chance of getting HIV through oral sex. That means oral sex is much less risky than anal or vaginal sex.



How can I lower my risk of getting HIV through sex?

Not having sex (also called abstinence) is the only way to know for sure that you won't get HIV through sex. But if that's not the right choice for you, take these steps to protect yourself:

- **Take PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis).** PrEP is a medicine for people who are at risk for HIV but don't have it. If you take PrEP every day, it's very effective at preventing HIV.
- **Use a condom every time you have sex.** When you use them the right way, condoms are also very effective at preventing HIV from spreading. Consider using water- or silicone-based lube during sex to help keep condoms from breaking or slipping. It's not a good idea to use oil-based lubes because they can damage condoms.
- **Get tested and treated for other STDs.** You're more likely to get HIV if you have another STD. Find a testing site near you at [gettested.cdc.gov](https://www.gettested.cdc.gov).

How do I get PrEP?

You'll need to get a prescription for PrEP from a doctor or another health care provider. If you don't have a doctor, try contacting community health centers near you to see if you can get a prescription there. Or go to [locator.hiv.gov](https://www.locator.hiv.gov) to find HIV services near you.





How do I talk to my partner about HIV?

It's important to have open, honest conversations with your partner about preventing HIV and other STDs. Talking about sex can be hard, so try these conversation starters:

- “I’m going to get tested for HIV, and I’d like you to get tested, too. No matter what the results are, we’ll know how to keep each other safe.”
- “Can we talk about sex? I want to make sure we’re on the same page about steps we can take to be safe.”
- “It’s important to me that we always use a condom when we have sex. Are you okay with that?”

Get tested for HIV

If you’re at risk of getting HIV, you need to get tested at least once a year. Visit [gettested.cdc.gov](https://www.gettested.cdc.gov) or call **800-CDC-INFO** (800-232-4636) to find HIV testing near you, including places that offer free or low-cost tests.



To learn more about HIV, visit:
[nlm.gov/guides/HIV-AIDS-Online-Resources](https://www.nlm.nih.gov/guides/HIV-AIDS-Online-Resources)