



Get the Facts About HIV

HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) is a virus that damages your immune system. This makes it harder for your body to fight infections.

There's no cure for HIV, but taking certain medicines can help people with HIV stay healthy. If HIV isn't treated, it can lead to AIDS.

What are the symptoms of HIV?

HIV happens in 3 stages, and the symptoms are different in each stage:

Stage 1: acute HIV infection

Many people have flu-like symptoms in the first 2 to 4 weeks after they get HIV.

These symptoms can include:

- Fever, chills, or muscle aches
- Sweating a lot while sleeping
- Rash
- Sore throat
- Feeling very tired
- Painful sores in the mouth
- Swelling in the armpits, neck, or groin

Keep in mind that HIV symptoms aren't the same for everyone — and some people don't have any symptoms at first.

Stage 2: chronic HIV infection

In Stage 2, many people don't have any symptoms. Without HIV treatment, people can stay in this stage for 10 years or more — and with treatment, many people never move to Stage 3.



Stage 3: AIDS

People who don't get the treatment they need will eventually move to Stage 3, which is also called **AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome)**.

AIDS can cause some of the symptoms from Stage 1. Symptoms of AIDS may also include:

- Losing weight quickly
- Diarrhea that lasts over a week
- Sores in or on the anus, vagina, or penis
- Pneumonia (a lung infection that can cause coughing and trouble breathing)
- Red, brown, pink, or purplish spots on or under the skin
- Memory problems
- Weakened muscles and numb hands or feet

People with AIDS are also more likely to get other serious illnesses.

The only way to know if you have HIV is to get tested.

Visit [gettested.cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov/gettested) to find HIV testing near you. Talk to your doctor if you don't know whether you need to get tested.





How do people get HIV?

HIV spreads through body fluids, like blood, semen (cum), vaginal or anal fluids, and breast milk. The most common ways people get HIV are by:

- Having anal or vaginal sex without a condom with someone who has HIV
- Sharing needles used to inject drugs with someone who has HIV

If a woman has HIV, it's also possible for her baby to get it during pregnancy, childbirth, or breastfeeding.

HIV does **not** spread through spit, tears, or sweat.

If you're worried about your risk for HIV, ask your doctor about steps you can take to protect yourself.

How does HIV treatment work?

HIV medicines lower the amount of virus in your body. These medicines are called **antiretroviral therapy (ART)**.

People who stick with their HIV treatment plan can keep the amount of virus in their body very low. This means they can lead long, healthy lives — and there's almost no chance that they can pass HIV to others.

To learn more about HIV, visit:
nmlm.gov/guides/HIV-AIDS-Online-Resources