

# HIV and AIDS — Get the Facts!



**Don't be fooled! Get the facts about HIV — these are the facts!**

**You can rely on this information to protect yourself from HIV!**

<b>There is no way to tell if someone has HIV by looking at them.</b>	Many people have HIV without knowing it. The only way to know if you have HIV is to have your blood tested.
<b>You cannot catch HIV like you catch a cold or the flu.</b>	HIV can be transmitted only when body fluid — either blood, semen, vaginal or rectal fluid, or breast milk — enters the bloodstream of an HIV-negative person. You cannot get HIV through kissing, hugging, using the same utensils, using the same toilet, any other casual contact, or mosquito bites.
<b>Preventing HIV is not about trust.</b>	Anyone can have HIV — and many people do not know their status. People who are in loving and trusting relationships, should all be involved in preventing HIV. This means using condoms or other prevention measures during sex, getting tested regularly, using anti-retroviral therapy for those who are living with HIV, and considering the use of PrEP methods.
<b>Some people face more barriers to HIV prevention than others.</b>	It is easier for HIV to enter the body through the walls of the vagina or the rectum than it is for the virus to enter the body through the penis. It is also harder for people who do not fit in typical gender norms, or who have same-sex relationships, do sex work, or inject drugs, to prevent HIV because society does not treat them equally, and they may have less power in their relationships to negotiate for HIV prevention. PrEP can help everyone take control of their health!
<b>No herbs or natural remedies can prevent or cure HIV.</b>	Inserting plants or herbs into the vagina or rectum can increase the possibility that HIV can enter the bloodstream. It can dry out the vagina or rectum, which can lead to tears and allow HIV to enter the body more easily.
<b>There is no cure for HIV.</b>	While there are many myths about curing HIV, and scientists are still working to find a cure, there is no known cure for HIV. People living with HIV who take their treatment regularly can achieve an undetectable viral load, which means they are not able to transmit HIV.
<b>Having sex during a person's period does not prevent HIV.</b>	If someone who is living with HIV has sex while on their period, it can increase the likelihood of HIV transmission because HIV can be found in menstrual blood.
<b>Anyone can get HIV.</b>	HIV does not discriminate based on gender, sexuality, age, what someone does for a living, or anything else.
<b>Treatment can help people living with HIV live a long and healthy life.</b>	Although there is no cure for HIV, there are treatments available, known as antiretrovirals, or ARVs for short. If treatment is started early and taken consistently, a person living with HIV can live a long and healthy life. These medications also help prevent the transmission of HIV to others.

# HIV Transmission & Prevention

## HIV Transmission

HIV can be transmitted from one person to another through blood, semen, vaginal fluid, rectal fluid, and breast milk. This can happen during:

- Vaginal sex
- Anal sex
- Oral sex

- Pregnancy
- Childbirth
- Breastfeeding

- Injecting drugs with a shared needle
- Direct contact with blood

## HIV Prevention



**PREP**  
If you don't have HIV, you can prevent HIV by using PREP methods that contain medications.



**PEP**  
If you've been exposed to HIV, you can prevent infection by taking HIV medication called PEP within 72 hours of exposure.



**ART**  
If you are living with HIV, you can prevent transmission to others by taking HIV treatment medication.

Additional methods you can use to reduce the chances of HIV transmission during sex are:



Using internal and external condoms every time you have sex — including vaginal, anal, and oral sex



Using water-based or silicone-based lubricant to prevent condoms from breaking and dry sex



Regularly testing for STIs and treating them immediately



Abstaining, reducing your number of sexual partners, and knowing your partner's status

A person living with HIV can reduce the chance of HIV transmission to their baby by:



Taking HIV medication during pregnancy, birth, and breastfeeding



Treating their baby with HIV medication



Using family planning to prevent unintended pregnancy if they do not want to become pregnant



Delivering the baby at a hospital or other equipped medical facility



If you are living with HIV and thinking of having a baby, talk to a doctor about the best way to reduce the chances of HIV transmission.

You can reduce the chance of HIV transmission through blood by:



Avoiding contact with other people's blood



Never using a needle that has been used by someone else



HIV can be transmitted during blood transfusions, but most hospitals now test blood for HIV before using it in a transfusion. If you're worried, ask your doctor!



YOU CANNOT GET HIV FROM TOUCHING, KISSING, OR SHARING FOOD AND DRINK WITH SOMEONE WHO IS LIVING WITH HIV.



# Test and Prevent

Everybody has a responsibility to contribute to the prevention of HIV in our community!

## TEST

### Test for HIV and STIs — and do it regularly!

Most HIV occurs when people don't know they have HIV. Knowing you have HIV gives you the power to take care of your health and prevent transmission to others. Knowing your partner's status is also important for making decisions about HIV prevention.

When you're getting tested for HIV, you can also test for other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Most STIs can be treated, but if they go untreated, they can cause serious health problems. STIs also make it easier for HIV to enter the body, so regular STI testing and treatment helps to prevent HIV.



## PREVENT

### Protect yourself from HIV transmission every time you have sex!



Male condoms and female condoms

Male and female condoms put a barrier between the most delicate skin and body fluids that may contain HIV and other STIs.



PrEP  
(pre-exposure prophylaxis)

PrEP methods use medication that a person without HIV can use to prevent HIV. The medication stops the virus from multiplying within the body. When a person uses PrEP correctly, their chances of getting HIV if they are exposed to it are reduced. PrEP doesn't prevent STIs or pregnancy, so it's best to always use a condom (with water-based lubricant if possible).

Abstinence, reducing your number of sexual partners, and voluntary medical male circumcision can also help prevent HIV.

## RESPOND

### If you've been exposed to HIV, act quickly!

If you're worried you might have been exposed to HIV, you can take medication to reduce the chances that you will get HIV.



PEP  
(post-exposure prophylaxis)

If HIV gets into the body, PEP can stop it from multiplying and spreading to other cells. If HIV can't spread, it dies. This can prevent you from getting HIV. PEP must be started within 72 hours of exposure to HIV, and it is taken every day for four weeks.

## TREAT

### If you've been diagnosed with HIV, start treatment as soon as possible to stay healthy and prevent transmission.

If you find out you have HIV, it's important to start treatment right away. It won't cure HIV, but it can stop the virus from spreading and developing into AIDS — meaning that you can live a long and healthy life. HIV treatment also reduces the risk that you'll transmit HIV to others.



ART  
(antiretroviral therapy)

ART is a combination of medications that work together to reduce the amount of HIV in a person's body and boost their immune system. If treatment is started early and taken every day, the amount of HIV in a person's blood can become so low that there's not enough of the virus to pass on to others. This is called an undetectable viral load.