



10 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT HIV AND AIDS

- 1 HIV is the virus that causes AIDS.** HIV stands for “Human Immunodeficiency Virus” and it affects your body’s immune system. Normally, white blood cells fight bacteria, viruses, and other germs when they enter the body. HIV destroys certain white blood cells and stops your body from being able to fight infections.
- 2 There is no cure or vaccine for HIV or AIDS.** There are only treatments that stop or slow the progression of HIV to AIDS. If left untreated, AIDS is fatal.
- 3 HIV symptoms can be treated.** If you have HIV your healthcare provider can tell you what your options are, such as treatment with Highly Active Anti-Retroviral Therapy (HAART). However, this only treats the symptoms of HIV. There is no cure for HIV or AIDS.
- 4 HIV is spread through contact with infected blood or other bodily fluids. For example:**
 - Having unprotected sex (vaginal, anal, or oral).
 - Sharing needles or other equipment for injecting drugs.
 - Using unsterilized needles for tattooing, piercing, or acupuncture.
- 5 An HIV-positive mother can spread HIV to her baby during childbirth or breastfeeding.** If you are HIV-positive and pregnant, talk to your healthcare provider about how you can keep your baby from being infected.
- 6 You cannot get HIV from casual contact, such as:**
 - Talking, shaking hands, hugging, or kissing a person who has HIV.
 - Being coughed or sneezed on by a person with HIV.
 - Using towels, toilet seats, doorknobs, dishes, cutlery, swimming pools, or water fountains.
 - Through mosquitoes or other insects or animals.
- 7 Use condoms to protect yourself from HIV.** Use condoms for vaginal, anal, and oral sex. Dental dams can also be used for oral sex. Birth control pills will not protect you from HIV. Use a condom even if you or your partner is on the pill.

Always use sterile needles and equipment for injection drug use, piercings, and tattoos. Do not share or borrow needles and equipment.



