

HIV AND AIDS INFORMATION

What is HIV?

HIV stands for human immunodeficiency virus. HIV may live in the human body for years and can be spread to other people even before any symptoms appear. HIV weakens the body making it incapable of fighting diseases and infections. As these conditions get worse, a person is diagnosed as having AIDS. Currently, there is no known cure for AIDS.

How is HIV Spread?

These are the most common ways in which HIV spreads:

- Having unsafe sex—whether vaginal, anal, or oral—with someone who is infected with HIV. Unsafe sex means letting someone else's blood, semen, or vaginal fluid get into your body;
- Sharing drug needles or syringes with an infected person; and
- From an infected mother to her baby during pregnancy or childbirth, and, rarely, through breast feeding.

How You Won't Catch HIV

You can't just *catch* HIV like a cold or flu, because the virus is a different type. You won't get HIV:

- Through the air or sitting next to someone at work, school, etc.;
- From saliva, sweat, tears, urine, or excrement; or
- Being bitten by mosquitoes or any other insect.

What Behavior Puts You at Risk?

The following behaviors are risky when performed with an infected person. You can't tell by looking if a person is infected.

- Sharing drug needles and syringes;
- Anal sex, with or without a condom;
- Vaginal or oral sex with someone who uses drugs or engages in anal sex;
- Sex with someone you don't know well (a *pickup* or prostitute) or with someone you know who has had several sex partners; or
- Unprotected sex (without a condom) with an infected person.

Preventing HIV

- If you are HIV negative, using HIV medications known as pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP);
- Getting tested for other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs);
- Abstaining from intravenous drug use;
- Choosing less risky sexual activities;
- Using condoms every time you have sex;
- Limiting your sexual partners; and
- Abstaining from having sex.

Why Get Tested for HIV?

- You think you may be infected, and you want to know for sure so that you can go on to consider getting medical help.
- Knowing your antibody status will keep you from infecting others through having unsafe sex and/or sharing needles.
- You are thinking about having a baby or breastfeeding your baby.

- You would feel less stress if you knew for certain whether you are infected.

HIV counseling and testing are available at many public health clinics at little or no cost. You do not have to use your real name, and all information is confidential. For HIV counseling and testing site locations, consult a counselor in the Educational Planning, Counseling, & Completion Center or call:

1. **Houston AIDS Hotline:** 832-393-5010
2. **Texas AIDSLINE:** 1-800-299-AIDS
3. **National AIDS Hotline:** 1-800-CDC-INFO
4. **National Drug and Alcohol Helpline:** 1-800-662-HELP
For Hearing Impaired: 1-888-232-6348
5. **National AIDS Clearinghouse:** 1-800-458-5231

How is HIV Treated?

According to HIV.gov (<http://HIV.gov>), no effective cure exists, but HIV can be controlled with antiretroviral therapy (ART). If taken in the right way, this therapy could prolong the lives of many people infected with HIV.