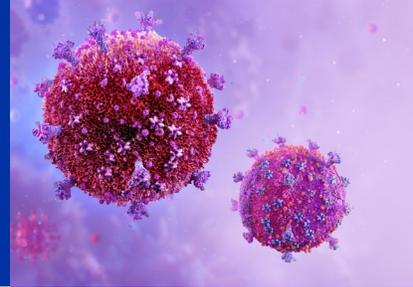


# HIV

## Human Immunodeficiency Virus



When a person is infected with HIV, their immune system is attacked and cells that normally help their body fight infections are destroyed. This makes people with HIV more likely to get very sick when they are exposed to other diseases. If left untreated, HIV can lead to AIDS, which stands for acquired immunodeficiency syndrome. Currently, there is no cure for HIV. When a person has HIV, they will have it for life. But, there are effective treatments that allow people with HIV to live long healthy lives. The treatments work by greatly reducing the amount of HIV in the body. This helps protect the immune system and prevents HIV infection from getting worse. HIV treatments also allow people with HIV to have sex with others without the worry of spreading the virus.



### How does HIV spread?

- ▶ HIV most commonly spreads when people have sex without a condom or HIV medicine to prevent or treat HIV. It can also be spread through sharing injection equipment, such as needles or syringes. Finally, HIV can be spread from mother to baby during pregnancy, birth, or breastfeeding.
- ▶ People with HIV can spread the virus by exposing others to their:
  - ▶ Blood.
  - ▶ Semen.
  - ▶ Pre-seminal fluid.
  - ▶ Rectal fluids.
  - ▶ Vaginal fluids.
  - ▶ Breast milk.
- ▶ HIV **cannot** be spread through:
  - ▶ Air or water.
  - ▶ Saliva, sweat, tears, or closed-mouth kissing.
  - ▶ Insects or pets.
  - ▶ Sharing toilets, food, or drinks.



### How will I know if I have HIV?

- ▶ The only way to know if you have HIV is to get tested. A doctor, local or Tribal health department, or an HIV counseling, testing, and referral (CTR) site can provide you with an HIV test. Most tests can detect HIV within 2–4 weeks after being exposed to the virus. Most people do not experience any symptoms from HIV.
- ▶ About one in five people living with HIV do not know they are infected. This means they are missing out on receiving treatment that could help them live a long, healthy life. It's important to get tested often if you are at higher risk for HIV.



### How can I prevent HIV?

- ▶ Ask a doctor about pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP). PrEP is an HIV treatment that can help prevent people from getting HIV before they have it.
- ▶ Get tested for HIV at least once or more often if you are at increased risk.
- ▶ Use condoms correctly every time you have anal or vaginal sex.
- ▶ If you have multiple sex partners or anonymous sex, choose sexual activities with little or no risk, like oral sex.
- ▶ Do not share needles, syringes, or other injection equipment with others.
- ▶ Get tested and treated for sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

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## How can I stay healthy and protect others if I have HIV?

- ▶ Find HIV care. It can keep you healthy and reduce your risk of giving HIV to others.
- ▶ Take HIV medicine as prescribed by a doctor.
- ▶ Stay in HIV care.
- ▶ Tell your sex or injection partners that you have HIV.
- ▶ Use condoms correctly every time you have sex.
- ▶ Talk to your partners about PrEP.
- ▶ Get tested and treated for other STIs.



## Additional resources:

- ▶ [DHS Wisconsin HIV Program webpage](#)
- ▶ [HIV.gov](#)
- ▶ [PrEP Locator](#)
- ▶ [AIDSV Interactive Online Mapping Tool](#)

