

# ACUTE HIV INFECTION — WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

## WHAT IS “ACUTE” HIV INFECTION?

Acute HIV infection is the earliest stage of infection and a time when the amount of virus in the body is very high. At this time, a person who has been infected recently may have flu-like symptoms, but not always. This acute stage lasts for the first several weeks until the body recognizes the virus and tries to fight it off. After the acute stage, persons continue to be infected.

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO KNOW IF I HAVE ACUTE HIV INFECTION?

There are two main reasons why you should know if you have a recent HIV infection:

1. If you have been infected in the past several weeks, there is a much greater chance that you can spread HIV to other people. Knowing you have acute infection means you can now help decrease the spread of HIV in your community.
2. Someone in acute HIV infection can stay healthier by getting HIV medical care as soon as possible. There are medicines for people with HIV that:
  - slow down how much the virus spreads in the body.
  - reduce damage to the body.
  - protect some cells in the body that keep people healthy.
  - can make people respond to treatment better for a longer time and improve the person’s overall health.

## HOW DO I KNOW MY TEST RESULT IS ACCURATE?

In order to get accurate results, your blood sample is tested with a few tests. The person who talks to you can tell you more about this.

## WHAT ELSE SHOULD I KNOW IF I HAVE ACUTE HIV INFECTION?

The most important thing to remember if you have a positive test result is that you are not alone. There are a variety of people and services to help you. These services include:

- Helping you connect to an HIV medical specialist.
- Paying for HIV medical care and medications if you do not have health insurance.
- Helping you figure out when and how to tell people your test results.
- Assisting you in telling your partners that they may be at risk without ever identifying your name. These partners will be encouraged to get an HIV test.
- Giving you more information about how HIV is spread.

The person who talked to you about testing can tell you about these and other services. They want to help you do the best thing for you and your community.

If you have questions after you leave, please call \_\_\_\_\_.  
People who know a lot about this are here to help you and protect your privacy.

