

HIV Prevention and Education for Women

Where can I learn more?

Go to knowmystatus.org to learn more about HIV, other STDs, and to find out where to go for HIV testing, support, and treatment in Texas.

More HIV and AIDS
information from DSHS:

dshs.texas.gov/hivstd/info/hiv

For STD testing locations in Texas, call:

2-1-1

For assistance with
substance use disorders:

samhsa.gov or 1-800-662-4357



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

Texas Department of State
Health Services

For HIV/STD questions, call
737-255-4300

or visit
dshs.texas.gov/hivstd

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Why do I need to worry about human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)?

While HIV affects men more than women, 24,000 women in Texas lived with diagnosed HIV in 2024.

HIV spreads through contact with blood, breast milk, and other bodily fluids. Any person with untreated HIV can pass the virus.

High-risk behaviors for catching HIV include:

- Unprotected vaginal, oral, or anal sex with men or women.
- Sharing needles or syringes.

If you have or have had a sexually transmitted disease (STD), you are at higher risk of getting HIV.

If left untreated, HIV can lead to acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), which leaves the body's immune system unable to fight other diseases and cancers.

Am I more at risk of getting HIV than a man?

You have a higher risk of contracting an STD than a man. The structure of the vulvar, vaginal, and rectal tissues and how they connect to the urethra, cervix, uterus, and ovaries increases your risk.

What should I say to my partner(s)?

If you and your partner(s) currently inject drugs, have unprotected sex, or both, you should discuss using condoms and getting tested for HIV with them.

Use these tips for talking to your partner(s):

- Practice what you want to say with a friend or family member before talking to your partner(s).
- Talk with your partner(s) before engaging in sexual activity or drug use.
- Avoid accusations. Talk about testing and using condoms instead.
- Keep a supply of condoms in your purse or in a cool, dry place.
 - ▶ Do not store condoms in your wallet.

If you worry your partner(s) may become angry or aggressive if you talk to them about using condoms or testing for HIV, call [1-800-799-7233](tel:1-800-799-7233) or text START to 88788 to contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline.

I am currently pregnant or planning to get pregnant. How will HIV affect my pregnancy?

If untreated, HIV can damage your health and the health of your baby. Possible complications include:

- Increased chances of miscarriage.
- Stillbirth.
- Below-average fetal growth.
- Low birth weight.
- Maternal death during childbirth.

Since HIV and AIDS damage the immune system, a pregnant woman with untreated HIV has an increased chance of catching other diseases, including other STDs. These diseases can also harm both you and your baby during pregnancy.

Left untreated, HIV can pass to your baby any time during pregnancy, childbirth, or breastfeeding.

However, if you receive an HIV diagnosis before or during pregnancy, medications can reduce the chance of passing HIV to your baby before, during, and after childbirth. Your doctor will test you throughout your pregnancy to ensure both you and your baby get proper treatment.

Should I still take an HIV test if I do not feel sick?

If you have had unprotected sex or shared needles with someone else, you should get tested for HIV and other STDs as soon as possible. Even if a person looks or feels well, they could still have HIV and not know it. An HIV test is the only way to know for sure if you have HIV.

Ask your doctor about HIV testing during your next well-woman check or physical exam. You can also find a list of HIV and STD testing locations in Texas by visiting dshs.texas.gov/hivstd/testing.

What if I was recently exposed to HIV? Are there any options for treatment?

If you believe you were exposed to HIV within the last 72 hours, go to your doctor or an emergency care physician immediately. They can test you for HIV and prescribe you medicine called post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) to reduce the risk of getting HIV.

How can I prevent HIV?

If you are at high risk of getting HIV, talk to your doctor about HIV testing, using condoms, and pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) treatment.

If you test negative for HIV, your doctor can prescribe PrEP to help prevent you from catching HIV. PrEP is safe to take with your birth control and minimizes the risk of getting HIV if taken every day.

I am currently taking birth control. Do I still need to use condoms?

You still need to use condoms if you take birth control. Birth control pills, intrauterine devices (IUDs), sponges, shots, and other forms of birth control do not protect you from HIV.

Is there a cure for HIV?

Currently, there is no cure for HIV. However, if you have HIV, there are treatments available that can help you live a long and healthy life with minimal chance of passing HIV to your partner(s) or children.

Some HIV medications may make your hormonal birth control less effective. Talk with your doctor about what birth control methods will work best for you.