

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT HIV

Where can I learn more?

Visit knowmystatus.org
or call 2-1-1 to find a clinic in your
area to get tested.

Many public health clinics provide
STD testing and treatment for little
or no cost. Your name and health
records are kept private.

DSHS HIV/STD Program

dshs.texas.gov/hivstd



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

Texas Department of State
Health Services

For HIV/STD questions, call
800-CDC-INFO (English/Español)
888-232-6348 (TTY).

Reproduction of this pamphlet is encouraged; however,
copies may not be sold and the Texas Department of
State Health Services should be cited as the source for
this information.

Stock No. 4-141
Revised 12/2022



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

Texas Department of State
Health Services

WHAT IS HIV?

HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) is a virus that attacks the immune system, the part of the body that fights infection. If HIV is not treated, the immune system becomes damaged and cannot protect against diseases. Eventually, this can cause AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome).

HOW DO PEOPLE GET HIV?

People transmit HIV through their blood, semen, vaginal fluids, rectal fluids, and breast milk. Vaginal and anal sex are the most common ways to transmit HIV. People can also get HIV from sharing needles, syringes, or other drug injection equipment. A woman can transmit HIV to a baby during pregnancy, birth, or breastfeeding.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF HIV?

Many people with HIV do not have any symptoms. Sometimes people have symptoms during an early HIV infection that feel like the flu, such as fever, fatigue, rash, muscle aches, or swollen lymph nodes. Other people may not have symptoms until HIV has caused AIDS. The only way to know for sure if you have HIV is to get a test.

SHOULD YOU GET A TEST FOR HIV?

Everyone between the ages of 13 and 64 should get tested for HIV at least once. You should get tested more often if you:

- Are a man who has had sex with another man
- Have had anal or vaginal sex with someone who has HIV
- Have had more than one partner since your last HIV test
- Have shared injection equipment or exchanged sex for drugs or money, or have a partner who has
- Have been diagnosed with or treated for a sexually transmitted infection, hepatitis, or tuberculosis

IS THERE A CURE FOR HIV?

There is no cure for HIV, but medicine can help you manage it. DSHS recommends all people living with HIV take medication to decrease the amount of HIV in the blood to a very low level. This is viral suppression. People living with HIV who maintain viral suppression can live long and healthy lives and will not transmit HIV through sex. If you have trouble paying for HIV medicine, contact the Texas HIV Medication Program at 1-800-255-1090.

WHAT ABOUT HIV AND PREGNANCY?

A pregnant woman can give HIV to their unborn child. If a pregnant woman with HIV takes medicine, they can reduce the chance of giving HIV to their baby to almost none. This is so important that a doctor will test pregnant women for HIV throughout their pregnancy.

HIV AND STDs

Get tested for HIV if you have another sexually transmitted disease (STD). Having an STD increases your chances of getting HIV.

PREVENTING HIV

If you have sex, you can use latex condoms to reduce your risk. When used the right way, condoms can stop the spread of HIV by preventing contact with semen, vaginal fluids, rectal fluids, and blood.

You can also reduce your risk of HIV and other STDs by limiting the number of sex partners you have, choosing sexual activities that carry a lower risk of infection, and talking with your partners openly and honestly about HIV and STDs. If you use drugs, do not share needles, syringes, or items you use to do drugs.

WHAT ARE PREP AND PEP?

If you are at increased risk of getting HIV, talk to your doctor about PrEP. PrEP stands for pre-exposure prophylaxis. It involves taking anti-HIV medicine to prevent HIV transmission if you are exposed to it. Taking PrEP greatly lowers your risk of becoming HIV-positive.

PEP stands for post-exposure prophylaxis. It involves taking anti-HIV medicine within 72 hours of exposure to prevent transmission. If you think you were recently exposed to HIV through sex, sharing needles and other drug injection equipment, or if you were sexually assaulted, talk to your health care provider or an emergency room doctor about PEP right away.