

HIV: What You Need to Know

What is HIV?

HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) is a virus that attacks the body's immune system.



People with HIV who get effective HIV treatment can live long, healthy lives and protect their partners.

Basic Facts

- The **HIV** epidemic began in the 1980's
- If **HIV** is not treated, it can lead to AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome)
- About **1.2 million people** are living with HIV in the United States, but **13%** are undiagnosed and unaware of their status
- Everyone aged **13 to 64** should be tested at least once in their lifetime
- **HIV** treatment has come a long way
- AIDS deaths have dropped, but the number of new **HIV** infections hasn't

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How it Spreads

Most people who get **HIV** get it through anal or vaginal sex, or sharing needles, syringes, or other drug-injection equipment.

Symptoms

- Most people have flu-like symptoms within 2 to 4 weeks after infection
- Symptoms generally last from a few days to several weeks
- Having these symptoms alone doesn't mean you have HIV. Other illnesses can also cause similar symptoms.

Diagnosis & Treatment

The only way to know your **HIV** status is to get tested. Knowing your status gives you information that empowers you to keep you and your partner healthy.

Treatment with **HIV** medicines is called antiretroviral therapy (ART). People with **HIV** should start ART as soon as possible.

Prevention

You can protect yourself and others with specific preventive strategies, such as never sharing needles and using condoms the right way during all sexual encounters.

There are also **HIV** prevention medicines such as, pre-exposure prophylaxis (**PrEP**) and post-exposure prophylaxis (**PEP**).

