

HIV

HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus. HIV causes the immune system, the system in the body that fights off illness and disease, to be weakened. This leaves a person open to getting sick more often and recovering more slowly than those who do not have HIV infection. HIV is passed from person to person through blood, semen and vaginal secretions. This can happen during unprotected sexual activity including vaginal, anal or oral sex, while sharing needles during injectable drug use, or an infected pregnant woman can pass the virus to the unborn baby. A person cannot get HIV by using drinking fountains, by being bitten by mosquitos or by going about their daily routing at school or work.

HIV infection is very serious

There is no cure for HIV infection — only treatment. AIDS, Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, is caused by HIV infections. HIV and AIDS leaves the body open to illness and disease that the body could normally fight off, but can't because the immune system is very weak. Eventually the immune system is so weak that other viruses and bacteria can easily infect the body and make a person seriously ill. There is treatment that helps improve the quality of life for individuals infected with HIV.

What about my sex partner?

If you think you are infected with HIV, you should talk with your partner(s). They, too, should be tested. Anyone you had sex with within the past 1-2 years should be tested. your health district is willing to help you contact your partner(s).

How can I avoid getting HIV?

- Have sex with only one person who is not infected and who only has sex with you.
- Use latex condoms correctly every time you have any sexual contact.
- Do not share drug injection equipment.
- Decide not to have sex — it's the only 100 percent sure way of avoiding HIV infection and other sexually-transmitted diseases.
- When you use drugs and alcohol, it's hard to make good decisions about your sexual activity . . . be safe.
- Remember: anyone who is sexually active can get a sexually-transmitted disease. It is not who you are, but what you do that counts.

How do I know I have HIV?

If you answer “no” to every question below, you are probably not at risk for having an HIV infection. However, if you answer yes to one or more of the questions, you should consider making an appointment at your local health district or other health care provider for testing and more information.

1. Have you ever had unprotected sex (anal, vaginal or oral)?
2. Have you ever had unprotected sex (anal, vaginal, or oral) with someone:
 - a. you know was infected with HIV?
 - b. who injects or has injected drugs?
 - c. who has shared needles with someone who was infected?
 - d. who has had unprotected sex with someone who has shared needles?
 - e. who has many partners?
3. Have you used needles or syringes that were used by anyone before you?
4. Have you or your partner(s):
 - a. received treatment for hemophilia between 1978 and 1985?
 - b. had a blood transfusion or organ transplant between 1978 and 1985?
 - c. had a blood transfusion outside of the U.S.?
5. Have you ever had a sexually-transmitted disease such as chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis or herpes?

Where can I learn more about HIV?

Call your personal health care provider or district health office. For referrals and additional information contact the National STD Hotline at (800) 227-8922 or for local Idaho Referrals and information the Idaho CareLine at (800) 926-2588.

