

# What are HIV and AIDS?

Although they are often mixed up these two words have different meanings. 'HIV' is the name of a virus, whereas 'AIDS' is a name for a collection of illnesses caused by this virus

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### What is HIV?

HIV stands for 'Human Immunodeficiency Virus'.

'Immunodeficiency' refers to how this virus weakens a person's immune system, the part of the body that fights off diseases.

HIV has been in humans for many decades but was only identified in the early 80s.

### What does the virus do?

Some people notice no symptoms when they are first infected with HIV. But within six weeks of infection most people suffer a short illness (lasting around two weeks) as their body reacts to the virus.

This involves two or more of the following:

- body rash
- sore throat
- fever

Once this passes an infected person usually feels fine for a number of years.

However, unless they start treatment before the virus

causes too much damage, as years go by they will usually start to suffer life-threatening illnesses such as:

- cancer
- tuberculosis (TB)
- pneumonia

This is because HIV is destroying cells (CD4 or T-cells) that our immune system needs to protect us from infections.

### What is AIDS?

AIDS stands for 'acquired immune deficiency syndrome'.

It means a collection of illnesses ('syndrome') caused by a virus people pick up ('acquire') that makes their immune system get weak ('immune deficiency').

You cannot get an AIDS diagnosis unless you are already HIV positive.

In the 1980s and early 1990s HIV treatment wasn't good at fighting the virus and most people with it were eventually diagnosed with AIDS. But now anti-HIV drugs can control (but not completely get rid of) the virus and far fewer people in Britain develop serious HIV-related illnesses.

This means the term 'AIDS' isn't used much by UK doctors now. Instead they talk about late-stage or advanced HIV disease or HIV infection.

### What is the difference between HIV and AIDS?

Some people use the terms 'HIV' and 'AIDS' as if they mean the same thing but they don't.

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# HIV

Without treatment, HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) can make a person very sick and even cause death. Learning the basics about HIV can keep you healthy and prevent transmission.

## HIV Can Be Transmitted By



Sexual Contact



Sharing Needles to Inject Drugs



Mother to Baby during pregnancy, birth, or breastfeeding

## HIV Is **NOT** Transmitted By



Air or Water



Saliva, Sweat, Tears, or Closed-Mouth Kissing



Insects or Pets



Sharing Toilets, Food, or Drinks

## Protect Yourself From HIV

- Get tested at least once or more often if you are at risk.
- Use condoms the right way every time you have anal or vaginal sex.
- Choose activities with little to no risk like oral sex.
- Limit your number of sex partners.
- Don't inject drugs, or if you do, don't share needles or works.



- If you are at very high risk for HIV, ask your health care provider if pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is right for you.
- If you think you've been exposed to HIV within the last 3 days, ask a health care provider about post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) right away. PEP can prevent HIV, but it must be started within 72 hours.
- Get tested and treated for other STDs.



## Keep Yourself Healthy And Protect Others If You Are Living With HIV

- Find HIV care. It can keep you healthy and greatly reduce your chance of transmitting HIV.
- Take your medicines the right way every day.
- Stay in HIV care.



- Tell your sex or drug-using partners that you are living with HIV. Use condoms the right way every time you have sex, and talk to your partners about PrEP.
- Get tested and treated for other STDs.



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