

What should I know about HIV/AIDS?

Bavaria Medical Department Activity Fact Sheet

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that about 1.1 million Americans are living with HIV, and as many as 1 in 5 don't know they are infected. More than 18,000 people with AIDS still die each year in the U.S. According to a recent article published by the CDC:

- Approx. 56,000 persons in the U.S. are newly infected with HIV each year.
- An estimated 32% of all HIV diagnoses in 2007 were late diagnoses, occurring shortly before the person developed AIDS, making early treatment impossible.
- Early HIV testing reduces the spread of disease, extends life expectancy and reduces costs of care.

How can I get HIV?

- (1) By having unprotected sex (sex without a condom) with someone who has HIV. The virus can be in an infected person's blood, semen or vaginal secretions and can enter your body through tiny cuts or sores in your skin, or in the lining of your vagina, penis, rectum or mouth.
- (2) By sharing a needle and syringe to inject drugs or sharing drug equipment used to prepare drugs for injection with someone who has HIV.
- (3) Babies born to women with HIV also can become infected during pregnancy, birth or breast-feeding.

You CANNOT get HIV:

- By working with or being around someone who has HIV.
- From sweat, spit, tears, clothes, drinking fountains, phones, toilet seats or through everyday things like sharing a meal.
- From insect bites or stings.
- From donating blood or from a closed-mouth kiss (but there is a very small chance of getting it from open-mouthed or "French" kissing with an infected person because of possible blood contact).

The following are successful strategies to combat HIV/AIDS:

- HIV testing is critical in preventing the spread of HIV. Most people change behaviors to protect their partners if they know they are infected with HIV. Soldiers are tested at least once every two years and must have a pre-deployment HIV test performed within 120 days of their deployment.
- Ensuring people have the information, motivation and skills necessary to reduce their risk continues to be important.
- Linkage to treatment and care, which enables individuals with HIV to live longer, healthier lives and reduce their risk of transmitting HIV. It is imperative that individuals with HIV know their HIV status and are linked to ongoing care and prevention services.

How do I protect myself from HIV?

- The surest way to avoid transmission of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) is to abstain from sexual intercourse, or to be in a long-term mutually monogamous relationship with a partner who has been tested and you know is uninfected.
- For persons whose sexual behaviors place them at risk for STDs, correct and consistent use of the male latex condom can reduce the risk of STD transmission. However, no protective method is 100% effective and condom use cannot guarantee absolute protection against any STD. The more sex partners you have, the greater your chances are of getting HIV or other diseases passed through sex. Also, the presence of other STDs increases the chance of transmitting or acquiring HIV. Get yourself tested if you believe you may have been exposed to an STD.

Get tested

You might have HIV and still feel perfectly healthy. The only way to know for sure if you are infected or not is to be tested. Timely HIV testing identifies infected persons, which enables them to seek medical care that can improve the quality and length of their lives and reduce the risk of HIV transmission to others. Please speak with a health care provider if you think you might have been exposed to or have possible symptoms for HIV or other STDs.

For more information, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at www.cdc.gov.



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