



Fact Sheet: HIV/AIDS

What is HIV?

The Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) damages cells in the immune (defense) system. These cells protect us by fighting off infection and disease. As the virus gradually destroys these cells, the immune system becomes unable to protect against illness.

What is AIDS?

Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is the last stage of infection with HIV, a cluster of symptoms associated with HIV infection. Does a positive test mean I have AIDS? Positive HIV test result does NOT mean a person has AIDS. A diagnosis of AIDS is made on the basis of the person's symptoms and on the results of lab tests such as CD4 counts, viral load counts.

What are the symptoms?

Most people do not feel ill during the first 8 to 10 years of an infection with HIV.

While the following symptoms can be caused by infection with HIV, they may also be associated with *other illnesses*:

- Constant tiredness
- Persistent fever
- Swollen glands
- A dry, nagging cough and/or shortness of breath
- Continued loss of appetite
- A large weight loss without dieting
- Diarrhea that won't go away
- Sores or rashes that won't go away
- Chronic yeast infections
- Night sweats
- Changes in memory or vision
- Unusual or persistent infections

How is it spread?

Getting blood, semen, or vaginal fluids infected with HIV into your body puts you at risk of infection. This includes having unprotected anal, oral or vaginal sex and sharing needles or drug works. You can't tell by looking at a person if they are infected with HIV. An infected woman can spread the virus to her baby during pregnancy, delivery or through breast milk. However, with proper treatment the chance of passing the virus from the mother to the newborn baby can be greatly reduced.

You cannot get the virus from:

- Casual contact with people who have HIV
- Tears or saliva
- Handling objects that have been touched by someone who has the virus
- Donating blood
- Mosquito bites

How is it treated?

Medical treatments can slow the rate at which HIV weakens the immune system. There are also treatments that can prevent or cure some of the symptoms associated with AIDS. Treatment can prolong the life of a person infected with HIV and improve their quality of life too. **Early detection** through testing offers more options for treatment and preventive care.

This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information call your health care provider

Visit our website at: www.gchd.us or the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention at: www.cdc.gov

Genesee County Health Department

630 S. Saginaw Street
Flint, Michigan 48502-1540

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You should be tested:

- If you have ever shared needles for injecting drugs
- If you know or suspect that your sex partner(s) have had multiple partners, used injection drugs, or had sex with prostitutes
- If you or your sex partner(s) have had a sexually transmitted disease (STD)
- If you have hemophilia or have had sex without a condom with a person with hemophilia
- If you have had a needle stick or other blood product exposure
- If you have had anal, vaginal or oral sex without a condom
- If you have had a blood transfusion between January 1978 and June 1985
- If you are pregnant (it is best to be tested before getting pregnant, if you have any of the above risks)
- If you have had sex with a prostitute or if you have more than one sexual partner

Where can I get tested?

You can be tested free of charge at the:

Genesee County Health Department
Adult Clinic
Floyd J. McCree Courts and Human Services
Center
630 S. Saginaw St.
Flint, Michigan 48502-1540

Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday
7:45 am - 11:00 am and 12:45 pm to 4:00 pm
Tuesday
12:45 pm to 4:00 pm
(The clinic is closed on all major holidays)

Call (810) 257-3612 for more information.

- Anonymous testing is available.
- All tests are confidential.
- Other community sites offer HIV testing or you can talk with your own health care provider.

How is infection with HIV prevented?

- Don't have sex. You cannot give or get an STD if there is no contact with the penis, vagina, mouth or anus of an infected person.
- Use a new, latex condom with a water-based lubricant every time you have sex. Condoms don't offer 100% protection but other than abstinence they are the best protection.
- Have sex with only one person who is having sex only with you. The more partners you have the greater your likelihood of becoming infected.
- Know your sex partner's history of infection with HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases and drug use. Past infection is a warning sign.
- Seek regular testing for HIV and know your partner's history of testing for HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases if you are sexually active with more than one person.
- Know your HIV status and the status of your partner(s). Consider being tested before having sex.
- Ask whether you should be tested. Remember, you won't automatically be tested for HIV when you go for a medical exam.
- If you are a health care worker, follow routine barrier precautions, and handle needles and other sharps safely.
- Don't share needles, toothbrushes, eating utensils or razors that could be contaminated with blood or body fluids.
- Don't shoot drugs. If you do shoot drugs, stop and get into a treatment program. If you can't stop, NEVER reuse or share your drug works. Contact your local health department for more information on cleaning your works and needle exchange programs.
- If you are thinking about getting a tattoo or body piercing, remember that you can get infected if the tools haven't been cleaned properly, or if the artist doesn't wear clean gloves with each new customer.
- Tell your partner if you are infected. Encourage them to be tested.

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