



HIV/AIDS Facts

What is HIV? What is AIDS?

The Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is a virus that harms your body's immune system by killing the cells that help your body fight infection. HIV is a human virus. It is never spread by animals or insects. AIDS is short for Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome. It is the disease that results once HIV destroys your body's immune system, which cripples its ability to fight off illnesses.

How do you get HIV?

HIV is spread:

- Through unprotected (without a condom) anal, vaginal or oral sex with an infected person.
- Through sharing needles with an infected person to inject any kind of drug.
- From an infected mother to her baby during pregnancy, at birth or through breastfeeding.
- By receiving infected blood/blood products. Since 1985, this is extremely rare due to screening of all blood and blood products for HIV.

HIV is **never** spread through:

- Mosquitoes
- Sneezing
- Closed-mouth kissing
- Toilet seats
- Hugging
- Food
- Saliva
- Tears
- Swimming pools
- Donating blood

Can you protect yourself from HIV?

Yes. The best ways to avoid HIV infections are:

- Not have sex (abstinence).
- Limit your number of sex partners.
- Use a latex condom correctly each time you have sex.
- Do not share needles to inject drugs, steroids or vitamins, or for tattoos or body piercing. Do not share materials used to prepare drugs for injecting.
- Know your HIV status, and talk to your sex partners about getting tested for HIV and other STIs.

What are the symptoms of HIV?

Symptoms may show up several weeks to several years after HIV infection. It is possible to be infected with HIV and not know it. Even if you have no symptoms, you can still infect someone. Symptoms may include:

- Flu-like symptoms
- Night sweats
- Weight loss
- Tiredness
- Diarrhea
- White spots in the mouth
- Yeast infections that won't go away

If you have any of these symptoms or if you have had sex with someone who has HIV or has these symptoms, call a health care provider or the Guilford County Department of Public Health right away. Since symptoms of STIs often resemble one another, getting tested is the only way to know for sure if you are infected.

Is there a cure for HIV?

No. The virus will always be in a person's body. There is no cure. However, treatments are available to address symptoms of HIV. Anti-viral medications can be given to HIV-positive persons by their health care provider to slow the onset of AIDS. If you are diagnosed as being infected with HIV, it is very important to seek medical help and follow all your doctor's instructions.

Who can I call for more information?

National STD Hotline: 1-800-227-8922

www.ashastd.org

Guilford County Department of Public Health

Greensboro or High Point: 336-641-7777

www.guilfordhealth.org