

What you need to know about HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS is a life-threatening disease that attacks the body's immune system.

AIDS is caused by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). People with the virus experience a weakened immune system. They begin to get serious and rare infections that would normally be stopped by their immune system. Their body becomes immune deficient. The name for this condition is acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS).

The symptoms of AIDS are primarily the result of infections that do not normally develop in individuals with healthy immune systems. These are called opportunistic infections. Common symptoms are fevers, sweats (particularly at night), swollen glands, chills, weakness, and weight loss.

As the medical community has learned more about how HIV works, they've been able to develop drugs that interfere with its growth. People with the disease now live much longer, but there is still no cure for HIV and AIDS.

Facts About PrEP

- **Is right for anyone at risk for HIV.**
- **Is only for people who are HIV negative.**
- **Reduces the risk of getting HIV from sex by about 99% when taken daily - CDC.**
- **Reduces the risk of getting HIV by at least 74% among people who inject drugs - CDC.**
- **HIV testing is done before starting PrEP because PrEP is only for people who are HIV negative.**
- **PrEP requires a prescription from a health care provider.**
- **Some people have side effects such as nausea.**
 - Symptoms generally subside over time.
 - No serious side effects have been observed.
 - Tell your health care provider if side effects are severe or do not go away.
- **It's important to take the medicine as directed.**
- **Condoms provide additional protection against HIV and STIs.**
- **Taking PrEP involves:**
 - HIV testing every three months.
 - Screening for sexually transmitted infections (STIs).
 - Appointments with a health care provider.
- **Paying for PrEP:**
 - Medicaid and all other insurance plans with prescription drug plans cover PrEP.
 - Assistance is available if uninsured, or if co-pay or deductible is too high.

HIV/AIDS Testing

All persons who are sexually active should be tested at least once a year. If you think that you may have engaged in a high-risk behavior or if you have had a partner who may have engaged in a high-risk behavior, see your family doctor, adolescent doctor, or gynecologist. The provider will talk with you and perform tests. The doctor may do a blood test or a swab of the inside of your cheek. Results may take from a few hours to several days.

People can also get tested for HIV/AIDS at clinics around the country. Most HIV/AIDS testing centers will ask you to follow up for counseling to get your results, whether the test is negative or positive. It is mandatory that, HIV/AIDS testing must be kept confidential.

How do you get HIV/AIDS? People infected with HIV may have no symptoms, but they can still transmit the infection to others. If the infection is not detected and treated, the immune system gradually weakens, and AIDS develops.

HIV can be transmitted from an infected person to another person through blood, semen (the fluid released from the penis when a male ejaculates), vaginal fluids and breast milk.

The virus is spread through high-risk behaviors, including having unprotected oral, vaginal, or anal sexual intercourse and sharing needles, such as those used for injecting drugs and in some cases tattooing.

If a person with HIV is pregnant, the baby can catch the virus from her before birth, during the birthing process, or from breastfeeding. If doctors know an expectant mother has HIV, they can usually offer treatments to the mother and baby that can decrease the change of the virus spreading to the baby.

HIV can be transmitted to a person receiving blood or organs from an infected donor. This is why blood banks and organ donor programs screen donors, blood, and tissues thoroughly.

HIV infection is not spread by casual contact such as hugging, by touching items previously touched by a person infected with the virus, during participation in sports, or by mosquitoes.

Prevention and Treatment for HIV/AIDS There is no cure for AIDS, which makes prevention so important. Stopping the spread of HIV is critical. Prevention methods including education, early intervention, counseling, testing, and the care and treatment of those infected.

When a person is infected with HIV, the virus slowly begins to destroy that person's immune system. Combinations of antiviral drugs and drugs that boost the immune system have allowed many people with HIV to resist infections, stay healthy, and prolong their lives. HIV positive women may take antiretroviral treatment to reduce transmission of HIV to their infants.

No drugs can cure HIV/AIDS. Sometimes side effects can occur. Some people develop resistance to the drugs and no longer respond to treatment if not taken properly.

The goal of AIDS treatment is to find the strongest possible regimen that is also simple and has the fewest side effects. If you have HIV/AIDS, it's important that you take an active role in every treatment decision. You and your doctor should discuss the risks and benefits of all therapies.



About Project CHEE

The Community Health Center Association of Mississippi (CHCAMS) is implementing its Communities Helping to End the Epidemic (CHEE) Project. The goal of the CHEE project is to

- 1) Reduce the number of new HIV infections,
- 2) Increase the HIV Workforce,
- 3) Increase HIV screening in non-clinical settings, and
- 4) Increase education and access to comprehensive HIV primary care and PrEP Services.

Project CHEE