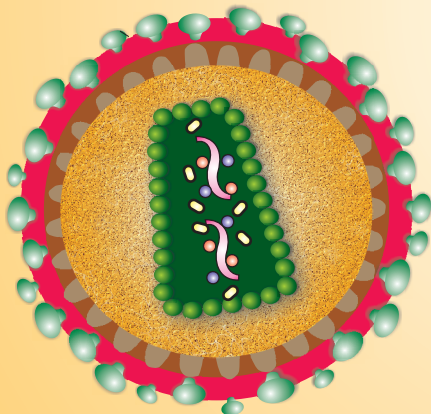


HIV & AIDS

2. What is HIV?

HIV is the Human Immune-deficiency Virus. A Virus is a tiny structure that you cannot see without the aid of a microscope. Like all other viruses, HIV must use living cells to replicate itself. When a person is infected with HIV, it attacks and weakens the immune system. An HIV infection, if not treated, will reach the stage of AIDS.



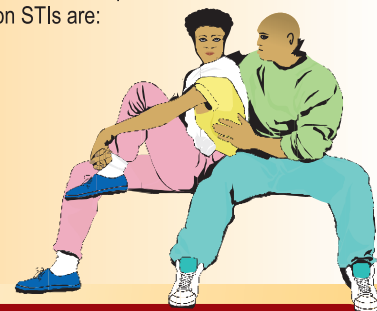
Model of Human Immune-deficiency Virus

3. What is AIDS?

AIDS stands for **Acquired Immune-Deficiency Syndrome**. A person has AIDS when his or her immune system gets so weak that it can no longer fight off infections like pneumonia and tuberculosis. Without treatment, a person will reach the stage of AIDS in 3 to 10 years after infection, depending on how strong his or her constitution is.

4. How does the body's Immune System work?

The Immune System is our system of defense against infections and diseases. It is made of millions of white blood cells that fight-off infection. HIV destroys the white blood cells also known as CD4 - T Lymphocytes. We are not aware of it, but our body is constantly on the alert to protect us from getting sick. Someone in the stage of AIDS is susceptible to infections that would not cause illness in a person with a healthy immune system. These infections are called Opportunistic Infections.



5. How is HIV transmitted?

In HIV infected persons, the virus is mainly found in blood, semen, vaginal fluids, and breast milk. HIV has been detected in very low concentrations in other body fluids (such as saliva, urine and tears); these have not been reported to cause infection.

The HIV is transmitted through three major sources: 1) sexual intimacy with an infected person, 2) introduction of HIV contaminated blood into the body, and 3) mother to child transmission (perinatal infection and breast-feeding).

This means that HIV can be transmitted by:

- Having unprotected sexual intercourse with someone infected with HIV.

- HIV contaminated syringes and needles.
- HIV contaminated instruments or tools that pierce or cut the skin (tattoos, circumcision, skin marking, ear-piercing, and other such procedures).
- Blood transfusions with HIV infected blood, if the blood has not been adequately tested for HIV (or taken during the window period).
- HIV can be passed from an infected mother to her child during the late stage of pregnancy, the process of childbirth or breast-feeding.
- HIV infected body fluids (mainly blood), that get into cuts, open wounds or abrasions of an uninfected person.

If you know you are HIV positive, do not have unprotected sex. Avoid infecting others

6. How is HIV **NOT** transmitted?

You cannot get HIV through casual contact

You cannot get the virus by:

- Dry kissing
- Sharing a bed
- Sharing food
- From a drinking glass
- Sneezing or coughing
- Sharing latrines or toilets
- Touching a door knob
- From insect bites (including mosquitoes)

7. Myths & Legends

AIDS can be cured by sleeping with a virgin - **FALSE**
 Certain blood types do not get HIV - **FALSE**

8. Church Practices

You don't get HIV from:

- Shaking hands
- Hugging
- Baptism
- Holy Communion
- Foot Washing

11. Living Positively with HIV/AIDS - 7 Tips For a Healthy Lifestyle

- 1 Eat a balanced diet. Good nutrition boosts your immune system.
- 2 Avoid smoking and alcohol.
- 3 Keep fit; get lots of exercise and fresh air.
- 4 Get sufficient rest.
 - Be responsible in your behavior towards others.
- 5 Get involved in helping others. It gives you a sense of purpose and focus.
- 6 Find people you can share your challenges with.
- 7 Trust in God.

KNOW YOUR STATUS



9. Co-infection HIV-TB

Co-infection of HIV and Tuberculosis (TB) is on the increase in Southern Africa. TB is an air-borne disease that is preventable and curable. Failure to properly follow treatment can lead to the Multi-Drug Resistant Tuberculosis (MDR-TB). Extensively Drug-Resistant Tuberculosis (XDR-TB) is the most dangerous form of TB. XDR-TB is very difficult to treat. **To avoid these complicated forms of TB, it is very important to get treatment as soon as possible and strictly follow it.**

- All people infected with HIV should be tested for TB
- All people infected with TB should be tested for HIV

10. IF SOMEONE WAS RAPED...

What should be done to minimize the risk of HIV infection?

The person that has been raped should be taken as soon as possible **-within 72 hours**, to a medical center in order to receive **post-exposure prophylaxis treatment (PEP)**, which will minimize the risks of HIV infection. **The sooner PEP is received, the better!**

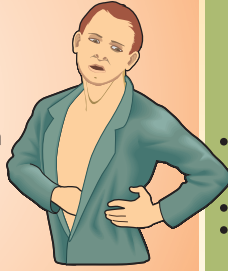


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12. Symptoms of HIV infection

A person may become infected with HIV and have no symptoms, or may believe that the symptoms are caused by another disease. A blood test is the only effective way to determine if a person has HIV. Possible warning signs of an HIV infection may include, but are not limited to:

- Unexplained fatigue
- Dry cough
- Unexplained weight loss, lack of appetite
- Recurring fever or night sweats
- A thick, whitish coating of yeast on the tongue or mouth
- Repeated vaginal yeast infections
- Swollen lymph glands in the neck, armpits and/or groin
- Persistent diarrhea (lasting more than one week)
- Unusual spots on the skin (bruises and rashes)
- Depression, memory loss, and neurological problems

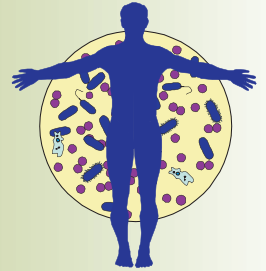


In many cases, people infected with HIV experience **NO SYMPTOMS**, but they can still transmit the virus to others.

13. What are Opportunistic Infections?

Opportunistic infections are infections that would do little harm to a healthy person, but can be fatal to a person with AIDS. Opportunistic infections may include:

- **Candidiasis** (oral & vaginal) - Thrush
- **Skin diseases**
 - Skin Rashes
 - Wounds & Sores
 - Orogenital Herpes
 - Dermatomal Zoster (shingles)
- **Lung infections**
 - Pneumonia
 - Pulmonary Tuberculosis
- **Diarrhea**
- **Cancers**
 - Kaposi's Sarcoma
 - Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma
- **Wasting Syndrome**
- **Brain and spinal cord infections**



IF YOU TEST POSITIVE, it means that you are infected with the virus and your body has made antibodies to HIV. Even if you feel completely well, you can spread the virus to others. Positive tests need to be re-confirmed soon after the previous test.

IF YOU TEST NEGATIVE, it either means:

- o That you are not infected with HIV, or
- o You are infected, but your body has not yet made enough antibodies to HIV to test positive.

16. The window period

Is the time between the first contact of the body with the HIV and the time when antibodies can be detected by the tests for HIV. It usually takes from 3 to 6 months. This means that a person who suspects exposure to HIV and gets a negative test, should be tested again 6 months later, assuming that he or she was not exposed again to HIV during that period.

14. HIV counseling and testing

Counseling should always precede the HIV test. No matter what the result is, counseling should also be given after the test is done. Post-test counseling for a negative result could mean staying negative for the rest of his or her life. Counseling for HIV infected people can mean the difference between hope and despair.

15. The HIV tests

Detect the presence of antibodies in your blood. The antibodies are produced by the body, in response to the infection by HIV.

GIVEN THE MAGNITUDE OF THE HIV EPIDEMIC, IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT EVERYBODY GETS COUNSELING AND TESTING FOR HIV!!!

KNOW YOUR STATUS

17. Prevention of HIV infection

HIV infection can be prevented by avoiding sexual contact before marriage (abstinence) and maintaining a faithful monogamous relationship with an uninfected person in marriage (faithfulness).

Condoms are used for family planning and disease prevention. Condoms should be used by married couples if one or both spouses is infected by HIV (or any other STI) to prevent infection of the uninfected partner. Therefore, condoms should also be used for discordant couples (a pair of long-term sexual partners in which one has a sexually transmitted infection and the other does not). When both partners are infected by HIV, condoms will help prevent re-infection.

If abstinence and faithfulness are not practiced, the person should be informed that the proper use of condoms reduces the risk of HIV transmission by 85-95%. HIV does not pass through a latex condom; the main reasons for the risk, are the incorrect use of condoms and the oil based lubricants which weaken the latex.

Appropriate screening of blood and blood products, and avoiding the use of unsterile needles for injections, reduces the risk of HIV transmission in the clinical setting.

Clinical studies indicate that male circumcision reduces the risk of HIV transmission by 60%. Please note, that the procedure for female "circumcision", also known as female genital mutilation, increases the risk of contracting HIV in women and girls.

Alcohol consumption is directly related with increased sexual risk-taking practices and behavior that may lead to HIV infection. Alcohol suppresses the immune system.



19. Treatment of HIV-AIDS

At present, there is no cure or vaccine for HIV infection. However, advances in drug combination therapies have helped to reduce the number of people with HIV who develop serious illnesses and die from AIDS.

It is extremely important to prepare the patient before starting treatment. In 1995, treatment using a combination of drugs known as HAART (Highly Active Anti-Retro Viral Treatment) was introduced. This treatment aims to almost totally stop the reproduction of HIV. Suppression of HIV to almost undetectable levels is usually possible if the patient strictly adheres to the treatment. The opportunistic infections can be treated to some extent with a variety of treatments.

20. Adherence to the treatment

NEVER stop an anti-retro viral treatment on your own; even if you feel better.

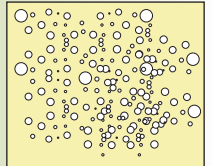
ALWAYS consult with your medical service provider.

Adherence means to take the medication as instructed

Every day *of* Every week *of* Every month *of* Every year

18. CD4 Count & Viral Load

CD4 count measures the number of CD4 T-cells in each cubic millimeter of blood. A normal count in a healthy, HIV-negative adult can vary, but is usually between 500 and 1500 cells/mm³. The CD4 cell count is the main test that doctors use to monitor your immune system. Most people with HIV, find that over time their CD4 cell count falls, although there may be long periods when it remains stable. If it falls below certain levels, you are at risk of contracting opportunistic infections, so you may be offered treatments to try to prevent them. Monitoring your CD4 count will help your doctor decide whether to start anti-HIV drugs, to try to prevent any further damage to your immune system. Today, a CD4 count of 300-350 is indicative of the need to start a treatment program for the HIV infection.



Viral load is the amount of virus circulating in the blood. More viruses means more risk of losing CD4-cells, and more risk of developing other diseases in the future.

21. Taking care of someone with AIDS

VERY IMPORTANT!!!

If you are caring for someone with AIDS, avoid all contact with the body fluids. Protect yourself by using gloves. Remember that if you don't use clean gloves, you can transmit germs to the patient.

For more information contact your Community Care Center

"I can do everything through Jesus-Christ who gives me strength"

Philippians 4:13



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