

Women and HIV

- Most women get HIV from having sex with men and not using a condom.
- Women from all backgrounds and cultures can get HIV. However, increasing numbers of African American and Latino women have HIV.

What is HIV?

HIV stands for **H**uman **I**mmunodeficiency **V**irus. HIV is the virus that causes AIDS.

HIV is a virus that attacks your immune system. The immune system has “T cells” that help protect your body from disease. A person with HIV does not have as many “T cells” as a healthy person. HIV makes it hard for your body to fight off sickness.

A person with HIV is called HIV positive (HIV+).

How do you get HIV?

You can get HIV by:

- Having sex with a person who is HIV+ and not using a condom
- Sharing needles or syringes (“drug works”) with someone who has HIV
- Getting blood from a person who has HIV

You can't get HIV by:

- Being in the same room with someone who has HIV
- Sharing a knife or fork, sheets, toilet seats, or phones with someone who has HIV
- Kissing a person with HIV
- Shaking hands with someone with HIV
- Getting bitten by a mosquito or other bug

What are the signs?

- You cannot tell who has HIV just by looking at them. Most people do not show any outward signs when they first get HIV.
- A person can spread HIV even if he or she does not look sick.
- **An HIV test is the only way to know for sure if you or someone else has HIV.**

It may take a few weeks or months for the HIV to show up on a test. This is called the “**window period**”. This means that a person who was just infected may not test positive, even though they have the virus. During the “window period” a person can pass the virus to others.



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Always protect yourself from HIV.

How do you get tested for HIV?

There are three main types of tests for HIV:

- **Blood**—A small amount of blood is taken.
- **Oral**—A cotton swab is put in your mouth for about 2 to 5 minutes.
- **Urine**—A small cup of urine is tested.

How do you get treated for HIV?

- There is no cure for HIV.
- There are medicines that you can take to help stop the virus from building up in your body, so that you can stay mostly healthy.

What should pregnant women know about HIV?

- When a woman is pregnant, she

can pass HIV to her fetus through her blood.

- A pregnant woman can take medicine to lower the chance of giving her baby HIV.
- HIV can get into her breast milk. A woman can pass HIV to her baby during breastfeeding.

What can you do if you are HIV+?

- See your doctor often.
- Take your medicine. Medicines must be taken regularly, or it will get harder to treat the virus with those medicines.
- Eat a healthy, balanced diet.
- Don't smoke or use illegal (street) drugs.
- Get regular exercise.

FDA Office of Women's Health <http://www.fda.gov/womens>

To Learn More:

FDA HIV/AIDS Program

<http://www.fda.gov/oashi/aids/hiv.html>

The National Women's Health Information Center

Phone: 1-800-994-WOMAN (1-800-994-9662)

TTY/TDD: 1-888-220-5446

<http://www.4woman.gov/HIV/index.htm>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Phone: 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)

TTY/TDD: 1-888-232-6348

AIDSinfo

<http://www.aidsinfo.nih.gov>

Phone: 1-800-448-0440

TTY/TDD: 1-888-480-3739