

TO LEARN MORE

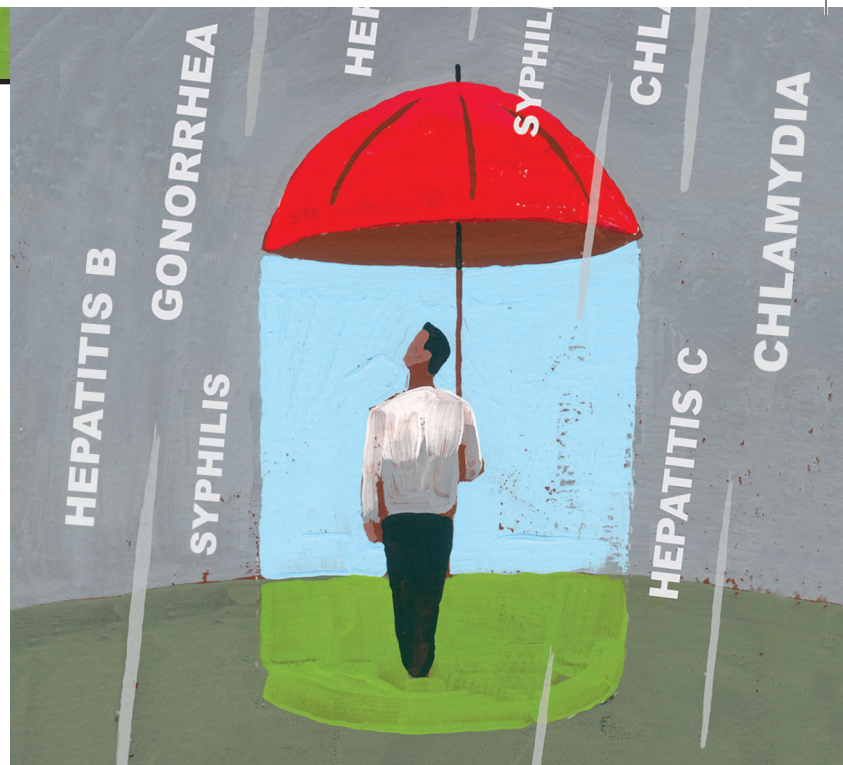
For more information on protecting yourself and others, contact CDC-INFO by e-mail at cdcinfo@cdc.gov or call **1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)** in English, en Español, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The number for callers with **TTY equipment** is **1-888-232-6348**.

Your call is free and private.

You can also access additional sources of information on HIV at **www.cdc.gov/PreventionISCare**

PREVENTION
Protect Yourself. IS CARE
Protect Others.



If you're living with HIV and not being safe,
you could be living with a lot more.

Protect yourself. Protect others.

Know the facts.

An estimated 1,039,000 to 1,185,000 people in the United States are living with HIV. Each year, about 40,000 more people get HIV. Every new HIV infection comes from a person already living with HIV. As a person with HIV, it's important to remember that your actions affect your own health and the health of others.

Protect yourself. Protect others.

Thanks to new medicines, you can live longer with HIV — and with a better quality of life — than ever before. The most important thing that you can do is make choices that keep you healthy and protect others.

Good choices are:

- Using condoms during every sexual activity
- Taking your HIV medicine as your doctor tells you
- Not sharing needles or works
- Not sharing razors, toothbrushes, or other things that may have your blood on them

Glossary

Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C: Viruses that affect the liver. They spread through blood and other body fluids through unsafe sex or sharing needles and drug works. An infected mother can pass these viruses to her baby during birth.

HIV: Human immunodeficiency virus. HIV is the virus that causes AIDS. Having HIV doesn't mean a person has AIDS.

Immune system: The body's defense against infection and disease.

Syphilis: A sexually transmitted disease. If left untreated, syphilis can cause heart and brain damage, paralysis, blindness, and possibly death.

Viral load: Refers to the amount of virus in the blood.

Works: Drug equipment such as needles, syringes, spoons, filters, cottons, water, swabs, and tourniquets.

Glossary

AIDS: Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome. AIDS is a disease that causes a weak immune system. AIDS increases the risk of getting certain infections and cancers.

CD4 count: A blood test that measures the T-lymphocyte, or CD4+, count. These cells are part of your immune system. As your CD4 count goes down, your risk of developing infections goes up.

Chlamydia: A sexually transmitted disease caused by bacteria. If not treated with the appropriate antibiotics, chlamydia can lead to infertility (not being able to have a baby). It can be passed from mother to baby during birth.

Genital herpes: A sexually transmitted disease caused by a virus. The sores associated with herpes are highly contagious. The virus can also be spread when no sores can be seen.

Gonorrhea: A sexually transmitted disease that affects the genital area and urinary tract. You can have gonorrhea without any symptoms.

Don't put yourself at risk.

HIV infection weakens your body's defense system. So getting another infection can harm your health.

Keep in mind:

- Unsafe sex (that is, sex without a condom) puts you at risk for other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) such as syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia, and hepatitis B and C
- Using unclean needles or works also puts you at risk for hepatitis

Don't put others at risk.

HIV is spread through body fluids such as blood, semen, vaginal fluids, anal fluids, and breast milk. Protect others by making sure they do not come into contact with your body fluids. Also, protect others by keeping yourself healthy. If you have HIV plus another STD or hepatitis, you are three to five times more likely to spread HIV than if you only have HIV.

Protect yourself. Protect others.

Practice safer sex.

Of course, not having sex is the best way to protect yourself from getting other STDs and spreading HIV. But if you are having sex, it is important to know that certain types of sexual activity — and the decision not to use a condom — greatly increase the chance of spreading HIV.

Consider these facts:

- Insertive oral sex with a condom has the lowest risk of HIV transmission. Compared with that, the risk of transmitting HIV is 400 times higher for receptive vaginal sex without a condom with an HIV-infected partner and 2,000 times higher for receptive anal sex without a condom with an HIV-infected partner
- Having unsafe sex with many partners also increases your chance of spreading HIV and getting other STDs

Your decisions about sex and condom use strongly affect your risk of spreading HIV. That's why it's so important to always practice safe sex — and to consider carefully the types of sexual activity you are going to do.

Even if you have a low viral load, you can spread HIV.

If you have HIV, there is a risk of giving it to others through unsafe actions. HIV can live in your body fluids and throat tissue, even when your viral load is low. And, the higher your viral load, the greater the risk. **Even people with viral loads lower than 3,500 can spread the disease to others.**

Stay healthy.

It's very important for you to take your HIV medicines exactly as directed. If you don't, your CD4 count may go down and your viral load may go up. Not taking your medicines as directed can also make the HIV virus resistant, which means the medicines won't help you anymore. Tell your doctor if your medicines are making you sick. He or she may be able to help you deal with side effects and feel better. *Don't* just stop taking your medicines.