

# HIV/AIDS 101

[CDC Guy] Hi there.

[Announcer] CDC Presents: Health Matters.

[CDC Guy] Well, it seems I have your attention.

[Frank] Where did you come from?

[CDC Guy] I'll explain later. I see you're interested in finding out about HIV/AIDS. Well, I'm here to help.

[Frank] Great, 'cause I have a lot of questions.

[CDC Guy] And I have a lot of answers. OK? Here we go.

[Frank] OK, so just how widespread is HIV/AIDS?

[CDC Guy] HIV/AIDS is a global problem with more than 34 million cases reported worldwide in 2010.

[Frank] That's huge.

[CDC Guy] Yes. And, in the US alone, over one million Americans are infected with HIV and more than 20 percent of those don't know it.

[Frank] What kind of an infection is HIV, exactly?

[CDC Guy] HIV – the Human Immunodeficiency Virus – is a virus that kills the human body's cells that help fight off infection and disease. There's no cure, but with proper medical care, people with HIV can live long, healthy lives.

[Frank] What about AIDS?

[CDC Guy] HIV causes AIDS – or Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. HIV infection destroys the body's immune system and when it fails, a patient can develop AIDS, become very sick, and die. More than 16,000 Americans with AIDS die each year. The virus can be transmitted to anyone. In the US, men who have sex with men account for more than half of all new HIV infections each year. But, others are also at risk, especially African Americans.

[Frank] It appears that many diverse people are at risk. So, how do you get infected?

[CDC Guy] The main ways people are infected are:

- Having unprotected sex – or sex without a condom – with someone who has HIV. The virus can be in blood, semen, or vaginal secretions. It can enter the body through tiny cuts or sores in the skin, the lining of the vagina, penis, rectum, or mouth.
- Also, sharing needles and drug equipment.
- And babies born to women with HIV also can become infected during pregnancy, birth, or breast-feeding.

[Frank] Aren't there a lot of myths about how you can get HIV?

[CDC Guy] You cannot get HIV by being around someone with HIV. Or, from saliva, sweat, tears, clothes, drinking fountains, phones, or toilet seats. Or through everyday things, like sharing a meal, insect bites and stings, donating blood, or from a casual, closed-mouth kiss.

[Frank] So, French kissing is risky?

[CDC Guy] It would be extremely rare that way – and only if there were contact with blood. For example, if the mouth or gums were bleeding.

[Frank] Good to know. How do I find out if I have HIV or AIDS?

[CDC Guy] Doctors can offer HIV tests. Or you can go to a local public health office or health care clinic.

[Frank] Who needs to get tested?

[CDC Guy] CDC recommends all Americans ages 13 to 64 get tested at least once to know their HIV status to help prevent spreading the disease. Annual HIV testing is recommended for persons with ongoing risk for HIV, such as injection drug users or people with multiple sex partners. Recent data suggest that high-risk men who have sex with men should be tested more frequently. And, pregnant women should get tested to lower the chance of giving HIV to their baby before, during, and after birth.

[Frank] Why is testing so important if there's no cure?

[CDC Guy] Because there is treatment. If you find out that you have HIV, you can get early medical care. It can help to slow the disease, support your immune system, help you live a longer, healthier life, and you could prevent giving the virus to others.

[Frank] What can you expect from an HIV test?

[CDC Guy] A health care professional takes a blood, urine, or oral sample and sometimes, you may even be able to wait for your confidential results. So, if you want to find out more, you can visit [HIVtest.org](http://HIVtest.org) to find a testing site near you.

[Frank] This is great information, but I have a big question. How can you protect yourself?

[CDC Guy] Abstinence – or not having sex – is the surest way to protect yourself. But, if you do have sex, make sure it's only with a partner who's not having sex with others, has been tested, and you know for sure is not infected. Also, consistent and correct use of a condom every time a person has sex can prevent transmission. And never sharing needles or drug equipment will also protect you.

[Frank] Infection from HIV sounds totally preventable.

[CDC Guy] If everyone gets the facts and gets tested, it would be a good start to preventing the spread of HIV. So ask your doctor for an HIV test. It's the only way to know for sure.

[Frank] Thanks. I'll take that advice.

[CDC Guy] Great. Well, it's time for me to go.

[Frank] Hey, where are you going?

[CDC Guy] Back to work!

[Frank] Cool. But before you leave, I have to ask you again, where did you come from?

[CDC Guy] Oh, ho. That's quite simple. I'm with the CDC.