



Key Facts About HIV/AIDS



A good health message from Community Health Network of CT
A Not-for-Profit Community Health Plan • 1-888-SUN-2345

What is AIDS?

AIDS stands for **Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome**.

- **Acquired** - means the disease is not hereditary but develops after birth from contact with a disease causing agent (in this case, HIV).
- **Immunodeficiency** - means the disease is characterized by a weakening of the immune system.
- **Syndrome** - refers to a group of symptoms that collectively indicate or characterize a disease. In the case of AIDS this can include the development of certain infections and/or cancers, as well as a decrease in the number of certain cells in a person's immune system.

What is HIV?

HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) is the virus that causes AIDS. This virus may be passed from one person to another when infected blood or secretions come in contact with an uninfected person's broken skin or mucous membranes or by having unprotected sex without a condom with someone who has HIV. People with HIV have what is called HIV infection. Some of these people will develop AIDS as a result of their HIV infection.

How to protect yourself from HIV/AIDS:

- Abstain from sexual intercourse, or practice healthy sexual habits - Be in a long-term mutually monogamous relationship with a partner who has been tested and you know is uninfected.
- Don't share needles and syringes used to inject drugs, steroids, vitamins, or for tattooing or body piercing.
- If you are pregnant or think you might be soon, talk to a doctor or your local health department about being tested for HIV. Drug treatments are available to help you and reduce the chance of passing HIV to your baby.



You can get HIV:

- By sharing a needle/syringe to inject drugs or sharing drug equipment used to prepare drugs for injection with someone who has HIV.
- From a blood transfusion or blood clotting factor that you got before 1985.
- Maternal-Child Transmission: HIV has been found in utero, amniotic fluid and can be transmitted through infant exposure to mother's blood at birth and after birth through breast milk.
- Sexual Transmission: By having sex with an infected person. Unprotected sexual intercourse (anal, oral, vaginal, male to male, male to female, female to male). Condoms and dental dams should be used.

You cannot get HIV:

- By working with or being near someone with HIV.
- From sweat, spit, tears, clothes, drinking fountains, phones, toilet seats, or through everyday things like sharing a meal.
- From insect bites or stings.
- From donating blood.

Testing for HIV/AIDS:

1. In many states, you can be tested anonymously. These tests are usually given at special places known as anonymous testing sites. The testing site records only a number or code with the test result, not your name.
2. You can go to your doctor or health department for testing or buy a home collection kit (for testing for HIV antibodies) at many pharmacies. To find a local HIV counseling and testing site, call your local health department or the CDC National AIDS Hotline, at 1-800-342-AIDS (2437).

To get more information on HIV/AIDS

You can call the CDC National AIDS Hotline at 1-800-342-AIDS (2437)
(Spanish/Español: 1-800-344-7432; TTY access: 1-800-243-7889).

* The Hotline is staffed with people trained to promptly and confidentially answer your questions about HIV and AIDS.

* The Hotline can offer you a wide variety of written materials and put you in touch with organizations in your area that deal with HIV & AIDS.

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Free, low-cost and affordable HUSKY health insurance for qualified children and families.

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HUSKY gives families the freedom of choice to enroll in one of several participating health plans.