



HIV 101: THE SHORT VERSION

HIV—the Human Immunodeficiency Virus- is the virus that causes AIDS (Acquired ImmunoDeficiency Syndrome)

All humans are at risk, even if that risk is low. There's no cure and no vaccine so preventing an infection in the first place is the only way to stay HIV free. Preventing an infection is all about managing risk.

TRANSMISSION: HOW CAN I GET IT?

HIV is ONLY transmitted through infected:

- ⌘ Blood and through the birthing process
- ⌘ Vaginal Fluid (lady cum)
- ⌘ Semen (jizz, cum, spunk, baby gravy)
- ⌘ Breast milk

HIV is NEVER transmitted through :

- ⌘ Coughing
- ⌘ Kissing
- ⌘ Toilet seats
- ⌘ Casual contact
- ⌘ Food, water or insects
- ⌘ Any other way you can think of



SYMPTOMS

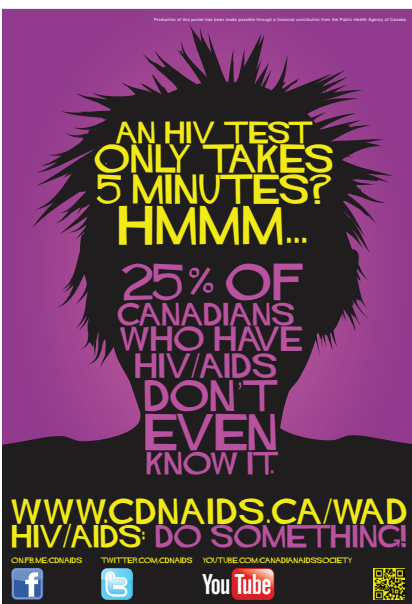
Often people don't have any symptoms after they've contracted the virus. Some people experience flu like symptoms in the first four weeks, as their bodies try to fight the infection. After that, though, people have been reported to have no symptoms at all for as long as a decade.

People who have the virus are, however, more likely to get common infections and develop fungi because HIV attacks their immune systems. They're more likely to develop STIs, rare cancers and fungal infections.

The only way to know for sure that you have HIV is to get tested.

TESTING

An HIV test looks for antibodies against HIV in your blood. The type of test that tests for these antibodies is called an ELISA test. If the antibodies



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are present in your blood, you are said to be HIV+. A more specialized test called a Western Blot is performed for all positive ELISA tests.

In Canada, there are 3 different types of HIV tests. They are all CONFIDENTIAL, but they are not all ANONYMOUS.

- ⌘ Nominal: The test is conducted using your name. Your name will appear on the test form, the results and in your medical file. In some cases, public health authorities will be notified if the test is positive.
- ⌘ Non-nominal: The test is conducted using a code or number. Only you and your doctor know that the code refers to you. In some cases, public health authorities will be notified if the test is positive.
- ⌘ Anonymous: Only you know that you took the test and what the result is. A code is used instead of your name and only you know that the code refers to you. In some cases, public health authorities will be notified if the test is positive.

Some clinics and AIDS service organizations also offer rapid testing, which allows you to get an HIV test and the results within 5 minutes.

PREVENTION

The good news is that HIV is hard to get and easy to prevent. The ways that you can prevent it are multiplying every year.

If you're HIV positive:

You can't prevent your own infection but you can protect your sexual partners and drug using networks by:

- ⌘ Using a condom consistently and correctly every time you have sex.
- ⌘ Reducing your number of sexual partners.
- ⌘ Starting treatment as early as you and your doctor are comfortable with. A recent study showed that early treatment reduced HIV infections by 96% in straight couples where one partner is positive and the other negative.
- ⌘ Use new injection and inhalation equipment every time you use drugs. Avoid sharing your works with others.
- ⌘ If you're comfortable doing so, disclose your status with your sexual partners and drug using networks.

If you're HIV negative:

You can prevent your own infection by:

- ⌘ Delaying the start of your sex life. Those who are older when they first start having sex are less likely to get infected.
- ⌘ Reducing your number of sexual partners and by remaining monogamous in your relationships.
- ⌘ Being unafraid to ask your sex partners and drug networks if they've been tested for HIV and by getting tested regularly for HIV yourself.

- ⌘ Insisting on the use of a condom every time you have sex and engaging in lower risk sex like oral sex when you can't successfully negotiate condom use.
- ⌘ Using clean injection and inhalation equipment every time you use drugs, and sharing as little as possible with others.
- ⌘ Using post-exposure prophylaxis or PEP. PEP is the use of HIV meds to prevent infection if you think you've been exposed to HIV. PEP has to be started as soon as possible after you think you've been exposed (and no later than 72 hours after) and it has to be taken every day for 30 days.
- ⌘ Using pre-exposure prophylaxis or PrEP. PrEP is the use of HIV meds to prevent HIV infection before exposure. The pills have to be taken daily. If, for whatever reason, you think you can't protect yourself from HIV in any other way and you think that you're at high risk for HIV infection, recent studies have shown that PrEP reduces the risk significantly for HIV infection

TREATMENT★ CARE AND SUPPORT

HIV is no longer a death sentence. There's a variety of effective treatments, suited to almost everyone. There even some treatments that are only a pill a day. Most treatments have side effects that can include nausea, loss of feeling in your extremities, diarrhea, weight redistribution, insomnia and depression. Speaking openly to your doctor about what you can and can't tolerate as far as side effects go will impact what treatment you're offered and will go a long way to improving the likelihood that you'll take your meds every day.

Care and support for people infected with and affected by HIV/AIDS is available through local ASOs. Many offer transportation, child care and meal supplements. Most host support groups, drop-ins and encourage people living with HIV to volunteer. If you're HIV positive and you feel alone, the ASO nearest you should be your first point of contact in your community. If you don't want to be seen going into an ASO, give them call to arrange a different way to access their services.



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