



Community Health Connections

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Fact Sheet

HIV and AIDS

HIV and AIDS

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is a virus that infects and can kill certain cells in the immune system called T-helper cells. This weakens the immune system so that other opportunistic infections can occur.

Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is the name given to the later signs of HIV infection.

Signs and Symptoms

Symptoms vary according to the phase of infection. An HIV-infected person who shows no symptoms is still able to transmit the virus.

Early Infection Symptoms

- May show no symptoms
- Brief flu-like illness 2-4 weeks after becoming infected
- Fever
- Headache
- Sore throat
- Swollen Lymph glands
- Rash

Later Infection Symptoms

- Swollen Lymph glands
- Diarrhea
- Weight loss
- Fever
- Cough and shortness of breath

Latest Phase of Infection (AIDS)

- Development of an opportunistic infection (an infection that occurs when immune system is impaired).
- A CD4 Lymphocyte count of 200 or less (normal is 800-1,200).

AIDS-related cancers

Cancers that are frequently diagnosed in people with HIV/AIDS include Kaposi's sarcoma, certain cervical cancers, certain lymphomas, and anal cancer.

Symptoms of AIDS

- Soaking night sweats
- Shaking chills/fever
- Dry cough/shortness of breath
- Chronic diarrhea
- White spots/unusual lesions on tongue
- Weight loss

People at high risk of AIDS and HIV

- People who share needles
- Men who have sex with other men
- Babies born to mothers with HIV
- People who received blood transfusions or blood products before 1985
- Anyone who has sex with anyone who has, or is at risk for, AIDS or HIV infection.

HIV is not spread by casual contact like living in the same household, or working with a person who carries HIV.

Prevention

- There is no vaccine
- Avoid high-risk behavior
- Sexual abstinence
- Long-term monogamous relationship with someone who is not infected

Diagnosis

A blood test may tell if you have HIV infection or AIDS.

Treatment

- Anti-retroviral drugs
- Lifestyle and home remedies
- Coping and support

Standard Precautions

Gloves, goggles, gowns, etc., are used by health care practitioners for prevention of transmission of any communicable disease including HIV.