







WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT HIV & AIDS^

WHAT IS HIV?	Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is a virus that weakens the immune system by destroying specific cells that fight infection and disease. There is no cure for HIV; however, with proper medical care, persons with HIV may live nearly as long as those who do not have HIV. HIV is an infection that progresses in three stages:		
	STAGE 1	Acute HIV infection	A person with acute HIV may develop flu-like symptoms within 2-4 weeks of infection, with symptoms that may last for a few days or several weeks. Due to the large amount of HIV in the blood, persons in the acute stage are very contagious.
	STAGE 2	Chronic HIV infection	Untreated HIV can progress to AIDS, typically a decade or longer after infection but may progress faster.
WHAT IS AIDS?	STAGE 3	AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is the most severe phase of HIV infection. AIDS is diagnosed when the CD4 T cell count falls below 200, or a person experiences an AIDS-defining complication (e.g., serious infection or cancer). Antiretroviral therapy (ART) can prevent HIV from destroying the immune system and advancing to AIDS. Without treatment, people with AIDS can survive about 3 years.
HOW IS HIV TRANSMITTED?	 Sexual contact (anal or vaginal intercourse) with an infected person when blood, pre-ejaculation fluid, semen, cervical/vaginal, and/or anal mucus secretions are exchanged  Sharing syringes, needles, cotton, cookers, and other drug injecting equipment with someone who is infected  Receiving contaminated blood or blood products (very unlikely after March 1985)  An infected mother, not on ART, can pass HIV to her unborn child before or during childbirth, or through breastfeeding  Receipt of transplant, tissue/organs, or artificial insemination from an infected donor (very rare)  Needle stick or other sharps injury in a health care setting involving an infected person (very rare)		

HIV IS NOT TRANSMITTED BY



Air or Water



Saliva, Sweat, Tears, or Closed-Mouth Kissing



Insects or Pets




Sharing Toilets, Food, or Drinks


EARLY DIAGNOSIS OF HIV INFECTION IS IMPORTANT!


GETTING
TESTED
FOR HIV:


Everyone should be tested at least once for HIV.


The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends persons who report any of the activities listed below should be tested at least yearly:


 A man who has had sex with another man*

 Injecting not medically prescribed drugs and sharing needles or other drug equipment

 Exchanging sex for money or drugs

 Diagnosed with or treated for another sexually transmitted infection, hepatitis, or tuberculosis

 Having more than one sexual partner since their last HIV test

 Having unprotected sex or sex with someone who has had unprotected sex

* Sexually active men who have sex with men may benefit from more frequent testing (e.g., every 3–6 months)

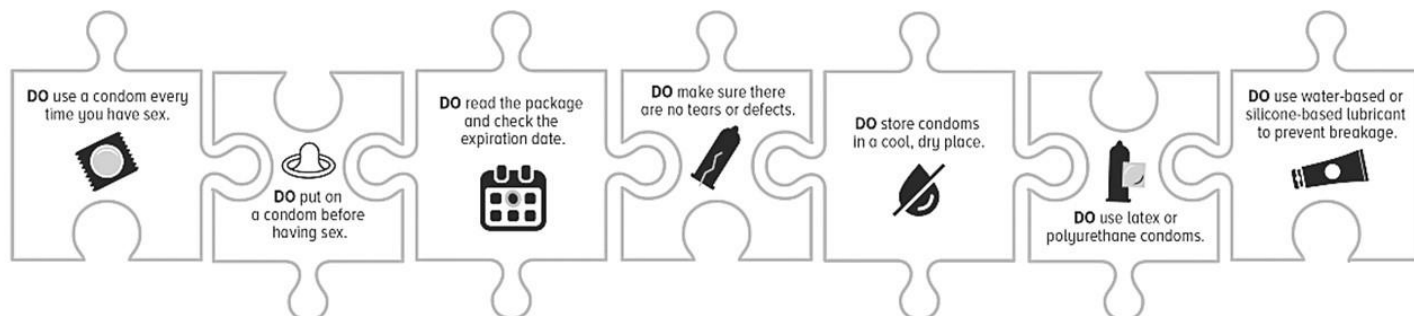
New infections may be identified as early as 4 weeks with new advances in screening tests. Free anonymous and confidential testing and counseling is available at every health department in Kentucky. If you have HIV, seek care immediately and a provider will help determine the best treatment plan. In many cases, early treatment can enhance a person's ability to remain healthy as long as possible.

Remember, you cannot tell whether someone has HIV just by looking at them!

HOW CAN I PREVENT HIV?

- ✱ Educate yourself and others about HIV infection and AIDS
- ✱ Do not share needles or other drug paraphernalia
- ✱ Practice "safer" sex:
 - ✓ Abstinence (not having sex of any kind)
 - ✓ Sex only with a person who does not have HIV, does not practice unsafe sex, or inject drugs
 - ✓ Using either a male or female condom
 - ✓ Do not share sex toys
- ✱ Persons at higher risk can help prevent HIV infections by taking pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP)
- ✱ Exercise universal precautions when coming into contact with HIV infected blood, semen, or vaginal fluid

HOW TO CORRECTLY USE A MALE CONDOM:



WHAT IS PrEP?

PrEP means taking antiretroviral medication by persons who have not been diagnosed with HIV, but who are at risk of acquiring HIV via sex or injection drug use. When taken as prescribed, PrEP can effectively stop HIV infection. Persons taking PrEP should continue to use condoms for maximum protection.

WHAT IS PEP?

Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) is an antiretroviral medication taken within 72 hours (3 days) of a potential exposure to HIV. PEP is intended for persons who have tested negative for HIV or are uncertain of their HIV status and should only be used in emergency situations.

WOMEN AND HIV/AIDS

All pregnant women should have blood tests to check for HIV infection.

Women diagnosed with HIV who are not on treatment can pass HIV infection to their babies during pregnancy, labor and delivery, and through breastfeeding. Risk of passing HIV to the baby is 1% or less if they practice all of the following:

- ✱ Take ART as prescribed
- ✱ Give HIV treatment to her baby for 4-6 weeks after giving birth
- ✱ Do not breastfeed or pre-chew her baby's food

UNDETECTABLE = UNTRANSMISSIBLE

Persons with HIV who take their HIV medicine as prescribed may remain virally suppressed or undetectable and healthy, with effectively no risk of sexually transmitting HIV to their HIV-negative partners.

LIVING HEALTHY WITH HIV

Begin treatment as soon as possible and take medications as prescribed. Maintaining an undetectable viral load is the key to living a longer, healthier life.

- ✱ Healthy living behaviors suggested for everyone are even more important for those living with HIV:
 - ✓ A healthy diet provides energy and nutrients a person's body needs to fight disease and infections (It may also improve absorption of prescribed medications and may help offset potential side effects.)
 - ✓ Exercise strengthens the immune system to better combat infections
- ✱ Discordant couples are at higher risk of HIV transmission:

HIV Negative Partner Should:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Be routinely tested for HIV ○ Ask their health care provider about PrEP
HIV Positive Partner Should:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Take ART as prescribed
Both Partners Should:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Use condoms during sex ○ Not engage in sex with other people

THIS AGENCY PROVIDES QUALITY SERVICES TO ALL PATIENTS, REGARDLESS OF HIV STATUS.

IF YOU NEED MORE INFORMATION CALL:

1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636) | 1-888-232-6348 TTY

Kentucky HIV/AIDS Program 502-564-6539

-or-

Your local health department

*accessed 3/3/2025 from: https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/about/?CDC_Aref_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/basics/whatishiv.html, <https://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/83515>, and https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/testing/?CDC_Aref_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/basics/testing.html