

HIV and AIDS

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)

is the virus that causes

Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS).

HIV is dangerous because it attacks the body's immune system. The immune system helps our bodies fight off infections. AIDS is the final stage of HIV and means that the immune system has been so weakened that it has a difficult time fighting off opportunistic infections. Opportunistic infections are rarely seen in a person with a normal immune system but can be deadly to people with HIV.

The HIV virus *can be transmitted* through these body fluids:

Blood
Semen
Vaginal Fluids
Breast Milk

The following activities may put you at risk for contracting the HIV virus:

- Having sex (anal, vaginal, or oral) without using a condom
- Sharing needles or syringes with someone infected with HIV
- Being exposed to HIV before or during birth or through breast feeding.

The HIV virus *is not transmitted* through other fluids:

Sweat
Tears
Urine
Saliva
Feces

The following activities **WILL NOT put you at risk for contracting the HIV virus:**

Using a public restroom, telephone or pool
Sharing a drink
Shaking hands or hugging
Donating blood
Mosquitoes

Symptoms of the HIV virus may not show up for years after contracting the disease. However, while a person is feeling well the virus is rapidly dividing and destroying the cells of the immune system. **That is why it is important to get tested.** There are early interventions that reduce the rate at which HIV destroys the immune system. Early detection offers more options for management and prevention.

Remember: **HIV does not discriminate.** It can infect anyone who engages in risky behavior.

COMMUNITY HEALTH OFFERS FREE CONFIDENTIAL HIV TESTING. Patients can schedule an appointment with a nurse to discuss the HIV virus, identify risky behavior, brainstorm risk reduction strategies, undergo a rapid HIV test, and receive post-test counseling. CommunityHealth does not offer treatment for the HIV virus but can work with patients to help them access the services they require.

ASK YOUR DOCTOR OR NURSE HOW TO GET TESTED TODAY!