



### Diseases Fact Sheet – AIDS/HIV

#### South Dakota Department of Health

**Office of Disease Prevention Services - 605-773-3737 -(1-800-592-1861 in South Dakota only)**

This material is provided for informational purposes only and is not a substitute for medical care. We are not able to answer personal medical questions. Please see your health care provider concerning appropriate care, treatment or other medical advice.

#### What is it?

HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) is a virus that attacks the body's immune system. If HIV is not treated, it can lead to [AIDS](#) (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome).

There is currently no effective cure. Once people get HIV, they have it for life, but with proper medical care, HIV can be controlled. People with HIV who get effective HIV treatment can live long, healthy lives and protect their partners.

#### Who is at risk for HIV/AIDS?

Anyone can get HIV. HIV infections have been reported from all age groups and races, in virtually every country in the world.

Behaviors that place a person at high risk for HIV infection include:

- unprotected sex, particularly anal sex and/or sex with multiple partners;
- needle sharing among injectable drug users.

People also at risk for HIV transmission include infants born to infected mothers and people whose job places them in contact with blood or other body fluids such as health, emergency and public safety workers. Transfusion/transplant recipients have a very small risk of infection. Blood and tissues to be used for transplants have been screened for HIV since 1985. Since the screening of blood and tissues began, the risk of HIV infection from those sources has been virtually eliminated.

#### What are the symptoms of AIDS?

Possible symptoms include:

- Fever
- Chills
- Rash
- Night sweats

- Muscle aches
- Sore throat
- Fatigue
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Mouth ulcers

But some people may not feel sick during acute HIV infection. These symptoms don't mean you have HIV. Other illnesses can cause these same symptoms. See a health care provider if you have these symptoms and think you may have been exposed to HIV. [Getting tested](#) for HIV is the only way to know for sure.

### How soon do symptoms appear?

Some people have flu-like symptoms within 2 to 4 weeks after infection (called *acute HIV infection*). These symptoms may last for a few days or several weeks. After the initial period, people infected with HIV may be free of clinical signs or symptoms for many months to years before the opportunistic infections and clinical symptoms of AIDS appear. As the immune system weakens, more AIDS diseases develop and the severity of the diseases may increase.

Fifty percent of people infected with HIV will develop opportunistic infections and clinical symptoms characteristic of AIDS within 10 years of infection of HIV. The fatality rate of AIDS is very high. Without treatment, people with AIDS typically survive about three years.

### For how long is a person able to spread HIV?

The higher someone's viral load, the more likely that person is to transmit HIV.

- Viral load is the amount of HIV in the blood of someone who has HIV.
- Viral load is highest during the acute phase of HIV, and without HIV treatment.
- Taking HIV medicine can make the viral load very low that a test can't detect it (called an undetectable viral load).
- People with HIV who keep an undetectable viral load (or stay [virally suppressed](#)) can live long, healthy lives. Having an undetectable viral load helps prevent transmission of the virus to others through sex or sharing needles, syringes or other injection equipment, and from mother to child during pregnancy, birth and breastfeeding.

If you have another sexually transmitted disease (STD), you may be more likely to get or transmit HIV.

### What is the treatment for HIV?

There is no known cure or vaccine to prevent infection, but with proper medical care, you can

control HIV. HIV treatment involves taking medicine that reduces the amount of HIV in your body.

- HIV medicine is called antiretroviral therapy (ART).
- Most people can get the virus under control within six months.
- Taking HIV medicine does not prevent transmission of other sexually transmitted diseases.
- HIV medicine is recommended for all people with HIV, regardless of how long they've had the virus or how healthy they are.

### How can HIV be prevented?

Today, more tools than ever are available to prevent HIV. You can use strategies such as abstinence (not having sex), never sharing needles, and using condoms the right way every time you have sex. You may also be able to take advantage of HIV prevention medicines such as pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP). If you have HIV, there are many actions you can take to prevent transmitting HIV to others.

### Related Sites:

- South Dakota Department of Health
  - [HIV/AIDS Testing Sites](#)
  - [HIV/AIDS Prevention Program](#)
  - [Ryan White Part B Care Program](#) (assistance for people with HIV/AIDS)
  - [Facts: How You Can Get HIV infection/AIDS & How You Won't](#)
  - [Related HIV/AIDS Links](#)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
  - [Division of HIV/AIDS Prevention](#)
  - [HIV/AIDS Among American Indians and Alaska Natives](#)
  - More information about HIV/AIDS is also available from the CDC National STD and AIDS Hotlines
    - English [1-800-342-2437](tel:1-800-342-2437) (AIDS)
    - Spanish [1-800-344-7432](tel:1-800-344-7432)
    - Deaf/Hard of Hearing (TTY) [1-800-243-7889](tel:1-800-243-7889)
- [Mayo Clinic](#)