

# Understand & Prevent

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## Is there a cure for HIV or AIDS ?

No, There is no cure for HIV or AIDS. However, there are medicines that fight HIV and help people with HIV and AIDS live longer, healthier lives.

## What is HIV?

HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is a virus that causes AIDS. HIV attacks the body's immune system. The immune system protects the body from infections and diseases, but has no clear way to protect it from HIV. Without treatment, most people infected with HIV become less able to fight off the germs that we are exposed to every day. Many of these germs do not usually make a healthy person sick, but they can cause life-threatening infections and cancers in a person whose immune system has been weakened by HIV. People infected with HIV may have no symptoms for ten or more years. They may not know they are infected. An HIV test is the only way to find out if you have HIV.

# What is AIDS?

AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) is a late stage of HIV disease. A person with HIV infection has AIDS when he or she:

- Has a CD4 cell count (a way to measure the strength of the immune system) that falls below 200. A normal CD4 cell count is 1000 or higher. ....OR
- Develops any of the specific, serious conditions - also called AIDS-defining illnesses - that are linked with HIV infection

# What are the symptoms?

The only way to determine for sure whether you are infected is to be tested for HIV infection. You cannot rely on symptoms to know whether or not you are infected with HIV. Many people who are infected with HIV do not have any symptoms at all for many years. The following may be warning signs of infection with HIV:

- rapid weight loss , dry cough
- recurring fever or profuse night sweats
- profound and unexplained fatigue
- swollen lymph glands in the armpits, groin, or neck , diarrhea that lasts for more than a week
- white spots or unusual blemishes on the tongue, in the mouth, or in the throat
- pneumonia
- red, brown, pink, or purplish blotches on or under the skin or inside the mouth, nose, or eyelids
- memory loss, depression, and other neurological disorders

# How is HIV transmitted?

- By having sexual intercourse (anal, vaginal, or oral sex) with an HIV-infected person
- By sharing needles or injection equipment with an injection drug user who is infected with HIV
- From HIV-infected women to babies before or during birth, or through breast-feeding after birth
- Through transfusions of infected blood or blood clotting factors
- Risk for HIV infection increases if you or a partner has a sexually transmitted disease (STD)

# **HIV is not transmitted by**

- Shaking hands, hugging HIV positive person
- Eating in utensils used by HIV positive person
- Wearing the same clothes
- Working and living with HIV positive person
- Going to school with an infected person
- Coughing and sneezing
- Caring/nursing HIV/AIDS patients
- Mosquito bite

# **How can one avoid HIV infection?**

- Not having sex with more than one partner. The more partners you have the greater your chance of becoming infected with HIV.
- Avoiding sex with persons who are known to be infected with HIV and those who share needles or equipment to inject drugs, tattoo, or body pierce.
- Always use screened blood and blood products
- Always use new and disposable syringe
- Using condoms consistently and correctly, are highly effective in preventing the transmission of HIV.
- Do not share needles, when injecting drugs into your body.

# **Can a person get HIV from a mosquito bite?**

No, Studies have shown that mosquitoes and other insects do not pass HIV to humans. When an insect bites a person, it does not inject its own blood or a previous victim's blood into the new victim. It injects only saliva. Unlike the germs that cause malaria and other diseases spread by insect bites, HIV does not reproduce (and therefore cannot survive) in insects. So, even if the virus enters a mosquito or another sucking or biting insect, the insect does not become infected and cannot pass HIV to the next human that it feeds on or bites

# **What do people do with HIV need to know about hepatitis?**

People with HIV should be tested for hepatitis A, hepatitis B, and hepatitis C. These illnesses can cause severe liver problems, especially in people with HIV. Hepatitis A is commonly spread through contaminated food or water. Hepatitis B and hepatitis C can be spread through unprotected sex or by sharing needles with a person who has either of these viruses. People with HIV should talk to their doctor about their risk for hepatitis, how to avoid infection, and whether they should receive vaccines to prevent hepatitis A and hepatitis B (there is no vaccine for hepatitis C). There are treatments available for hepatitis B and hepatitis C, but they do not work for everyone.

## **Test for HIV?**

### **Is there a test for HIV Infection?**

YES, There are a number of tests that detect either antibodies to HIV or HIV itself. Body produces antibodies to fight germs. People who are infected with HIV have HIV antibodies in their body fluids. One can get tested for HIV from VCT Centers established all over in Pakistan.