

HIV Factsheet

What is HIV?

HIV — Human Immunodeficiency Virus — attacks your body's "CD4 cells." CD4 cells (also called T-helper cells) help your body fight off infection and disease. Unlike some other viruses, your body can't fight off HIV. HIV is a lifelong infection. There is no cure for HIV, but there are medicines to manage the virus. Early diagnosis of HIV infection and subsequent care and support can help improve the health of the person tested and reduce the risk of HIV transmission to others.



What is AIDS?

Normally, your immune system helps you fight off illness. AIDS — Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome — is the disease you get when HIV attacks and damages your body's immune system. Having AIDS makes a person more likely to get other types of infection.

How do I get HIV?

HIV lives in blood and body fluids like semen, breast milk, amniotic and vaginal fluids. You can get HIV:

- By having unprotected oral, anal or vaginal sex with a person who has the virus
- By sharing needles with a person that has the virus
- By coming in contact with blood, or blood products or body tissues (usually before 1985) that have the virus
- By a mother who has the virus: Mothers can pass the virus to the fetus during pregnancy, birth or breastfeeding.

How can I prevent HIV?

- Know your HIV status.
- Don't have sex.
- Stay in a long-term, mutually monogamous relationship with an uninfected partner.
- Limit the number of sex partners.
- Correct and consistent condom use:
 - Use a latex condom every time you have sex.
 - Use only water-based lubricants such as K-Y Jelly, Wet, or Prepair.
 - When putting on the condom, pinch the tip to prevent an air bubble from forming.
 - Store condoms at a constant room temperature.
 - Do not use an expired condom.
- Get tested and treated for STIs and insist that your partners do, too.
- Male circumcision also has been shown to reduce the risk of HIV transmission from women to men.
- Do not inject drugs.
- Obtain medical treatment immediately if you think you were exposed to HIV. Sometimes HIV medications can prevent infection if they are started quickly. This is called post-exposure prophylaxis, or PEP.
- Pre-exposure prophylaxis, or PrEP, is a prevention option for people who are at high risk of getting HIV. It's a pill taken every day and used with other prevention options such as condoms.

How do I get tested for HIV?

We recommend that everyone ages 15 to 65 years get an HIV test at least once. All pregnant women should get an HIV test. People at high risk for HIV should be tested more often. You may be offered an HIV test at your health care clinic. You can also find a test site close to you at the following links:

- <http://aids.gov/>
- <http://hivtest.cdc.gov/default.aspx>

There are 2 types of HIV tests

1. A rapid HIV test is done in the clinic with a small blood sample or a mouth swab. You will know the results within 20 to 40 minutes, depending on the test used.
2. An oral or blood specimen can be sent to a lab to run the test. Your health care provider can tell you when to expect the results but it can take as long as 2 weeks to get the results.

If either of these tests is positive, a second test is required to confirm the results.

What do my HIV test results mean?

If your results are negative, you do not have HIV unless you were exposed very recently. HIV tests might not become positive until 2 months after your most recent exposure to the virus. If you were exposed to HIV in the 8 weeks before the test, you should come back for another test in 2 to 6 months.

A positive confirmatory test means a person has the HIV virus.

Will anyone I know find out my results?

Your test results and personal information are kept confidential in your medical record. Health care providers are required to maintain their clients' privacy. Positive HIV tests are reported to the state health department with other identifying information. Anonymous HIV testing is available at some clinic sites.

If I find out that I have HIV, what do I do next?

- Find a health care provider who specializes in the treatment of people with HIV. There is help available:
 - If you live in the Denver Metro Area, call 303-602-3652 or visit DenverHealth.org/LinkageToCare
 - If you live outside the Denver Metro area, contact Maria Chaidez at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment at 303-692-2734 or email Maria.Chaidez@state.co.us.
 - For information about resources for care <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/sti-hiv>

- Talk to your doctor about treatment options, such as antiretroviral therapy (ART). Today, HIV treatment is easier to take, has fewer side effects and is much more effective.
- Antiviral medication can be taken by HIV positive women who are pregnant to protect their babies from getting HIV.
- Get tested for other sexually transmitted infections and TB (tuberculosis).
- Talk to your sex partners so they can be tested too. Tell a new partner about your HIV status before you have sex.

Other Community Resources:

- HIV Resources Planning Council: <http://dhrpc.org/default/index.cfm>
- Denver Colorado AIDS Project: <http://www.denvercap.org/index.html>
- Boulder County AIDS Project (BCAP) (Boulder, Broomfield, Clear Creek, and Gilpin Counties): <http://bcap.org/>
- Northern Colorado AIDS Project (NCAP) (Larimer, Logan, Morgan, Philips, Sedgwick, Washington, Weld, and Yuma Counties): <http://www.ncaids.org/>
- Western Colorado AIDS Project (West-CAP) (Archuleta, Delta, Eagle, Dolores, Garfield, Grand, Gunnison, Hinsdale, Jackson, Lake, La Plata, Mesa, Moffat, Montezuma, Montrose, Ouray, Pitkin, Rio Blanco, Routt, San Juan, San Miguel, and Summit Counties): <http://www.westcap.info/>
- Southern Colorado AIDS Project (S-CAP) (Alamosa, Baca, Bent, Chaffee, Cheyenne, Conejos, Costilla, Crowley, Custer, El Paso, Elbert, Fremont, Huerfano, Kiowa, Kit Carson, Las Animas, Lincoln, Mineral, Otero, Park, Powers, Pueblo, Rio Grande, Saguache and Teller): <http://www.s-cap.org/>

