

What is AIDS?

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is a preventable but deadly disease. It is spreading fast. You can protect yourself and others by taking precautions.

AIDS is caused by a virus called Human Immunodeficiency Virus or HIV. HIV can live in body fluids like blood, sex fluids, and breast milk.

When someone gets HIV, the virus takes over the body's immune system. The immune system is what protects the body from disease. With HIV, the body cannot fight disease anymore.

Testing HIV Positive

There are many things to do right away if you test positive...

- *Start medical treatment
- *Seek counseling
- *Join a support group
- *Take preventive care

Getting Help

HIV / AIDS Hotline

(800) 342-2437 (English)

(800) 344-7432 (Spanish)

Miguel Cruzado, Sr.
Read/Write/Now
Springfield, MA
(413) 263-6839

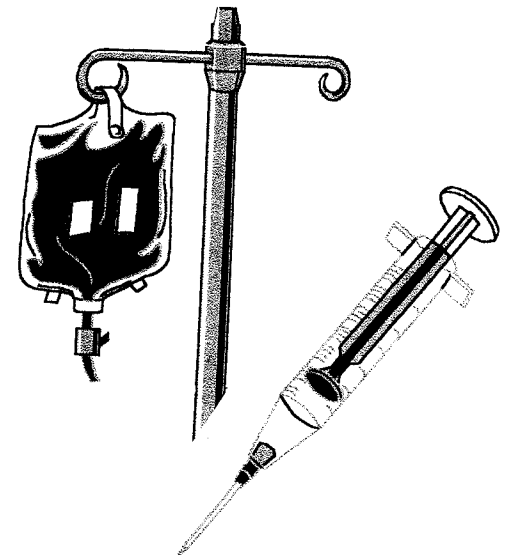
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HIV / AIDS

What You Need To Know...

How To Protect Yourself...

Where To Get Help...



How Do You Get HIV/AIDS?

The most common ways of getting HIV/AIDS are...

- *Having unprotected sex with an infected person.
- *Sharing needles with IV drug users.
- *Breast feeding a baby when the mother is infected.
 - *During childbirth (passing it from mother to baby)

Who Can Get HIV/AIDS?

ANYONE.

You cannot tell if someone has HIV/AIDS by looking at him. Some people are unaware that they are infected with the virus.

You Cannot Get It From...

- *Touching
 - *Hugging
 - *Sneezing
 - *Toilet seats
 - *Shaking hands
 - *Insect bites
 - *Water fountains
 - *Giving blood
 - *Eating food prepared by an infected person
- HIV cannot pass through unbroken skin.

How Can You Protect Yourself?

- *Do not have sex.
- *If you do have sex, use a latex condom.
- *If you use IV drugs, do not share needles.

Should You Get Tested?

YES if...

- ...you have had a blood transfusion (1978-1985).
- ...you have had unprotected sex with more than one partner in the past 10 years.
- ...you or your partner has ever injected drugs.
- ...you or your partner have had any other sexually transmitted disease in the past 10 years.
- ...you have had sex with anyone who might answer YES to any of the above.

A simple blood test can tell if you have HIV. The HIV antibodies may develop 3 to 6 months after being exposed. Don't be afraid to be tested. It may take 10 to 12 years for AIDS symptoms to develop.