

# HUMAN IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS (HIV)

## Fact Sheet

Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is a chronic disease that attacks the body's immune system, which can increase your chances of developing serious infections or cancer. If left untreated, HIV can lead to acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), an advanced stage of HIV infection. There is no cure for HIV, but HIV prevention and treatment options are available.

*Office of Minority Health and Health Equity*

### Who is affected by HIV?

In the United States, an estimated 1.1 million people are living with HIV. African Americans and Hispanics/Latinos account for 2 out of 3 new diagnoses. Both men and women can become infected. Men who have sex with men, transgender women who have sex with men, and people who inject drugs have a higher risk of contracting HIV. Higher rates of HIV in certain communities may result from issues such as stigma and lack of awareness of someone's HIV status.



### How can I get tested for HIV?

Routine screening is the best way to reduce the spread of HIV. Screening is recommended for people ages 13 and over and for those with a higher risk of infection. There are three types of tests that may be used for screening and diagnosis:

- **Antibody tests** look for antibodies (proteins) in your blood or saliva that are made by the body in response to an HIV infection
- **Combination (fourth-generation) tests** look for both HIV antibodies and antigens, which are foreign substances that cause your immune system to activate
- **Nucleic acid tests** look for nucleic acids (genetic material) of HIV in the blood

Ask your health care provider to test you for HIV or visit [locator.hiv.gov](https://locator.hiv.gov) to find testing sites near you. You can also use an FDA-approved home HIV testing kit.

### How is HIV treated?

HIV medications, known as **antiretroviral therapy (ART)**, slow the progression of the disease in your body by lowering the amount of HIV in your blood. This keeps the immune system strong enough to fight off other infections.

ART involves taking a combination of HIV medications every day regardless of how long someone has had the virus or how healthy they are. You can also visit [HIV.gov](https://www.hiv.gov) to learn more about treatment options.

### Benefits of starting treatment early

- Significantly lower your chances of spreading HIV to HIV-negative people through sex, needle sharing, or from mother to child during childbirth and pregnancy
- Lower your chances of getting certain HIV-related cancers and infections
- Increase your chances of living a longer and healthier life

### HIV prevention medication

PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) is a method of preventing HIV infection that involves taking HIV medications every day, before possible exposure. Studies show that PrEP lowers the chances of getting HIV from sex by about 99% when taken daily. Among people who inject drugs, PrEP lowers the chances of getting HIV by at least 74% when taken daily.

### HIV and clinical trials

The FDA encourages diverse participation in clinical trials. If you think a clinical trial may be right for you, talk to your health care provider. You can also search for clinical trials in your area at [www.clinicaltrials.gov](https://www.clinicaltrials.gov).

For more information on health equity, visit [www.fda.gov/healthequity](https://www.fda.gov/healthequity).