




What is HIV?

HIV stands for **H**uman **I**mmunodeficiency **V**irus. **AIDS** stands for **A**cquired **I**mmune **D**eficiency **S**yndrome. HIV is the virus that attacks the immune system, and can lead to AIDS. The HIV virus will kill cells in the immune system, and then the immune system deteriorates. When it has deteriorated to the point that it is unable to fight off diseases, a person is said to have AIDS.

How is HIV transmitted?

HIV can be found in blood, semen, vaginal fluids and breast milk. You *cannot* contract HIV through sweat, tears or saliva. The three most common ways that HIV is transmitted is:

-  Sharing injecting/piercing equipment
-  Unprotected sexual intercourse
-  Infected mother to her baby, before and during birth or by breast feeding

What are the first symptoms of HIV infection?

Some people may experience no symptoms when initially infected with HIV. Those who do may experience flu-like symptoms i.e. fatigue, fever, chills, nausea, headaches, diarrhoea and swollen lymph glands in the neck, armpits or groin. This is known as the sero-conversion illness.

How can I protect myself and others?

It's an old message, but it is the best message - you can protect yourself and your partner from HIV/AIDS by practicing safe sex (use condoms correctly with water based lubricant) and by not sharing needles.

How do I find out if I am HIV positive?

A blood test is the only way of detecting HIV. It can take up to three (3) months to detect HIV in the blood. This is called the window period. For more information, you can obtain details from your local Sexual Health Clinic at this weblink: <http://www.health.qld.gov.au/sexhealth/help/default.asp>.

You can also contact your local Positive Directions team or phone 1800 422 313 (if outside of Brisbane) for assistance.

What else do I need to know?

- World AIDS Day is the 1st of December every year and uses the **RED RIBBON**.
- It is important to remember that you can live, work, and socialize with someone who has HIV without being at risk. HIV is a blood borne virus, not an air-borne virus.
- Prevention is everyone's business – always use condoms, and consult a HIV specialist in your area to gain access to the latest treatment and advice.

Want to know more?

Contact your local Positive Directions team for advice, support and information.

About

Positive Directions

Spiritus Positive Directions is funded by Queensland Health to provide a state-wide care co-ordination, information and referral service for People Living With HIV (PLHIV) in Queensland.

Locations

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This fact sheet was produced using information found at:

Queensland Health
www.health.qld.gov.au/sexhealth/

Queensland World AIDS Day Alliance
www.qldworldaidsday.org.au/index.html

The Body
www.thebody.com