



# What you need to know about HIV

HIV stands for human immunodeficiency virus. The illness weakens a person's immune system by destroying important cells that fight disease and infection. This can lead to AIDS, severe illness and death.

But there is good news. With the right medical care, HIV can be controlled and people who have it can still live long, healthy lives.

## How HIV spreads — and how to stop it

The illness can be transmitted by:

- Sexual contact
- Sharing needles or syringes
- Mother to baby during pregnancy, birth or breastfeeding

Here are some tips and tools that can help you protect yourself and stop the spread of HIV:

- Use a condom correctly every time you have sex.
- Don't inject drugs or if you do, don't share needles, syringes or other equipment.
- A pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is a medication that is taken to prevent HIV. If you're at risk for HIV, ask your primary care provider (PCP) if a PrEP might be right for you.
- If you think you've come in contact with HIV in the past 3 days, talk to your PCP about a post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP). It is a medication taken to prevent HIV in emergency situations.
- Talk to your PCP about more things you can do to protect yourself.

### Today there are more ways to test for HIV than ever before

Whether it's self-testing in your own space or finding a test site, we can help you find the way that works best for you.

And remember, HIV care can keep you healthy for many years. Treatment can also lower your chance of spreading the illness to others.

So get checked.

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## When to get tested

Everyone ages 13-64 should get tested for HIV at least once. If you're pregnant or planning to get pregnant, it's important to get tested as early as possible to protect yourself and your baby. You may want to get tested at least once a year if you've:

- Had sex with a partner who has HIV, or with anyone whose sexual history you don't know
- Had more than one partner since your last HIV test
- Shared needles, syringes, or other equipment to inject drugs
- Exchanged sex for drugs or money
- Had another STD, hepatitis or tuberculosis

Once you know your test results — negative or positive — you and your PCP can make a plan to help keep you healthy in the future.



## We can help

HIV testing is quick, painless, private and available at no-cost to you.

If you have questions or need help scheduling an appointment, call Member Services toll-free at **1-866-270-5785**, TTY **711**, 7 a.m.–7 p.m., Monday–Friday

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