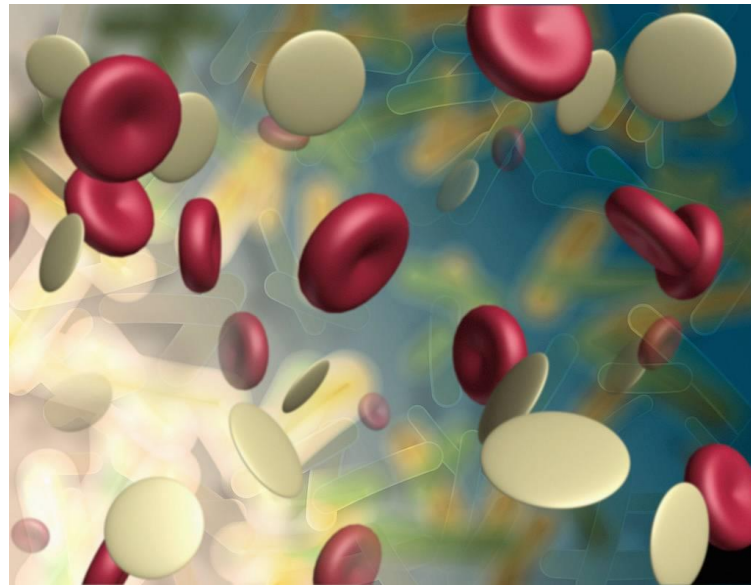


● ● ● | **Health Point:
Understanding
HIV and AIDS**



HIV and AIDS are very serious and deadly diseases.

- HIV and AIDS affect your immune system – that is the part of your body that keeps you from getting sick.
 - If you have HIV or AIDS, you can get other illnesses and infections more easily than most people, and you can have a harder time getting better.
- There is no cure for HIV or AIDS.
 - Scientists are still looking for a cure.
 - Even though there is no cure for these diseases, there are medicines that can help you feel better and live longer.



HIV causes AIDS.

- HIV is a sexually transmitted disease – a disease that mainly spreads from person to person during sex.
- If you catch HIV, over time you will develop AIDS and get very sick.
- People with HIV sometimes don't develop AIDS for many years, but they can still be sick and can pass the HIV to other people during this time.



HIV and AIDS affect your immune system.

- Your immune system is the part of your body that protects you from getting sick.
- If your immune system is weakened:
 - You can catch illnesses (like a cold or pneumonia) more easily than other people.
 - It is harder for your body to get rid of illnesses once you have caught them.
- Over time, people with AIDS develop many illnesses and infections because of their weakened immune systems.





It is possible for anyone, even healthy people, to get HIV and AIDS.

- HIV can move from person to person in some body fluids like:
 - Semen and vaginal secretions (the fluids that pass from person to person during sex).
 - Blood.
- This means that you can catch HIV by:
 - Having sex with someone who has HIV and not using a condom.
 - Using the same needle to inject illegal drugs that a person with HIV has also used.
 - Receiving blood transfusions.
 - Being born to a mother who has HIV or AIDS.

● ● ● | **If you catch HIV, you may not feel any symptoms right away.**

■ But over time, you may notice symptoms such as:

- Feeling like you have a flu that will not go away
- Fever
- Diarrhea
- Rashes
- Weight loss



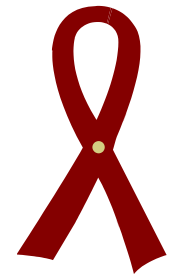
Your doctor can test your blood for HIV.

- If you notice these symptoms, you should call your doctor and ask to be tested for HIV.
- Even if you do not have symptoms, you should be tested for HIV yearly or before you initially have sex with a person, if you are sexually active.
- Your doctor will take a sample of your blood and send it to the lab where they will test the blood for HIV.



● ● ● | **There is no cure for HIV and AIDS, but there is treatment.**

- If you have HIV or AIDS, your doctor can prescribe medication to help you fight it.
 - Medications can help you live a long time with HIV and AIDS.
 - Regular check-ups with your doctor are also important to keep you healthy.



There are many ways that you can protect yourself from HIV and AIDS.



■ Don't use illegal drugs and don't use needles that have been used by other people.

■ Practice abstinence – this means not having sex at all.

■ If you decide to have sex:

– Ask your sexual partners to get tested for HIV.

– Use a condom every time.

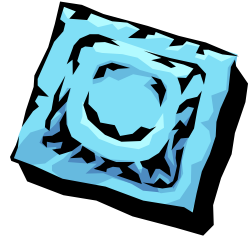


Avoiding needles that other people have used will lower your risk of catching HIV.

- You can get HIV by sharing needles or syringes with someone who has HIV.
 - This often happens when people are using needles to put illegal drugs into their bodies.
 - You can lower your chances of catching HIV by not using illegal drugs.
- If you get a tattoo or piercing, make sure the needles are clean and the person is licensed by the State.
- If you come across a needle or syringe in a place like a park, don't touch it!



Using a condom when you have sex can also lower your risk of catching HIV.



- If you are sexually active, or if you are thinking about having sex for the first time, you can ask your doctor about safe sex!
 - Safe sex means using a condom every time you have sex.
 - You can ask your doctor to show you the correct way to use a condom.
 - Safe sex also means making sure that you and your partner are tested for HIV on a regular basis.
- A sure way to prevent HIV is to practice abstinence – this means not having sex at all.

You can support your friends who have HIV and AIDS!

- It is safe to be friends with people who have HIV and AIDS!
- You cannot get HIV from:
 - Sharing food or drinks with your friends.
 - Hugging or kissing your friends.
 - Holding hands with your friends.
 - Spending time with your friends.
- Your friends who have HIV and AIDS need your love and support.



- ● ● | **If you or your friend have HIV or AIDS, you can find support in your community!**

- AIDS support groups are places where you can go to talk about how you are feeling and provide support to others who have HIV or AIDS.



- Even if you don't have AIDS, you can attend to support a friend who does.

- You don't have to fight AIDS on your own - there are many people in your community who can help you!

● ● ● | **Check out these links to find support groups in your area!**

■ Herpes Support Forum

– <https://honeycomb.click/>

■ San Francisco AIDS Foundation

– <http://www.sfaf.org>

■ University of California-San Francisco AIDS Health Project

– <http://www.ucsf-ahp.org>

■ Project Open Hand

– <http://openhand.org>



Check out more resources on DDS SafetyNet!

■ Understanding Sexually Transmitted diseases (STDs)

<http://www.ddssafety.net/health/sexually-transmitted-diseases/understanding-sexually-transmitted-diseases>

■ Safe Relationships

- <http://www.ddssafety.net/health/sexually-transmitted-diseases/safe-relationships-and-safe-sex>



You can also check out these links to learn more about HIV and AIDS.

- amFAR: The Foundation for AIDS Research
 - <http://www.amfar.org>
- Project Inform
 - <http://www.projectinform.org>
- AVERT (an international AIDS organization)
 - <http://www.avert.org>
- American Red Cross
 - <http://www.redcross.org/services/hss/hivaids>
- AIDS.org
 - <http://www.aids.org>

