

- Take HIV preventive medicine:
 - Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) is medicine for people who do not have HIV. It is not a vaccine. Thus PrEP only works when you take it every day. If you stop taking it, you will not be protected. PrEP does not prevent other STIs. Any GP can prescribe PrEP. If you do not have a Medicare card, you may access cheaper PrEP at www.greencrosspharmacy.online. Because PrEP is medicine, there may be side effects when you take it. You cannot take another person's HIV medicine to prevent HIV.
 - Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) is

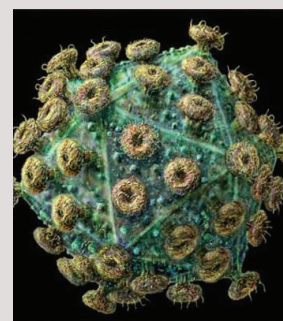
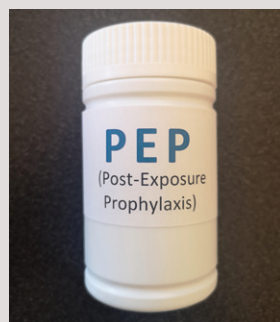
medicine for people who may have been exposed to HIV. PEP must be started within 72 hours after exposure, but the sooner you start PEP, the better. To be protected PEP needs to be taken for 28 days after exposure.

PEP can only be prescribed by doctors at sexual health clinics, Hospital Emergency Departments in Queensland, and GPs who prescribe HIV medicine.



Stay Safe & Protected

Information about HIV/AIDS



Please contact us at www.eccq.com.au/bbv or download a copy of the **Let's Talk About It** booklet from our website for further information about HIV, Hepatitis and STIs. You can also ask us to send you hard copies for free.

Website: www.eccq.com.au/bbv
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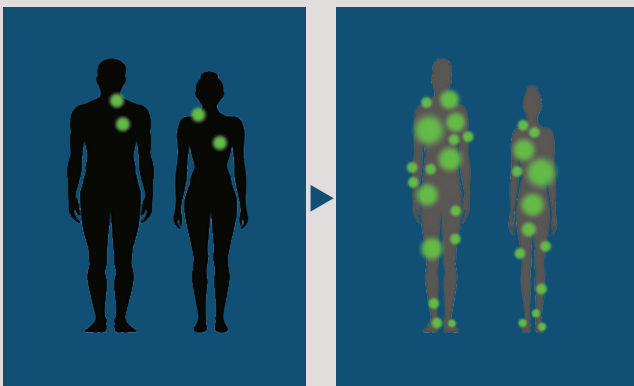


What is HIV?

HIV stands for **H**uman **I**mmunodeficiency **V**irus (HIV). It is a virus that damages the body's immune (defence) system. **Without treatment**, HIV makes your immune system very weak after many years of infection.

What is AIDS?

AIDS stands for **A**cquired **I**mmuno-**D**eficiency **S**yndrome. It is the late stage of untreated HIV. At this stage, the body has trouble defending itself against various diseases such as cancer, TB and other infections. Many people with HIV die from AIDS due to these diseases. In Australia most people with HIV are on treatment and therefore do not progress to AIDS. Only HIV can be transmitted between people, AIDS cannot.



How do people get HIV?

HIV is transmitted through body fluids including:

- blood
- semen
- vaginal fluids
- breast milk

There are only a few activities that can put people at risk of getting HIV:

- Sex without protection, such as without condoms.
- Mother to child: a mother who has HIV can pass it on to her child during pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding. However, this risk is very low in Australia because there are ways to prevent mother-to-child transmission. A mother living with HIV can have a healthy baby.
- Blood contact such as using unsterile medical equipment, sharing needles and syringes, or receiving blood transfusions and organ/tissue transplants that are contaminated with HIV. This risk is extremely low in Australia.

HIV is **not** transmitted by:

- Hugging
- Kissing
- Sharing food, cups, drink bottles or utensils
- Shaking hands
- Saliva
- Sweat
- Urine
- Mosquitoes

How do you know you have HIV?

Many people with HIV do not have symptoms for many years. Only an HIV test can tell whether a person is infected. All GPs can provide a confidential HIV test. You can also get a test at your local sexual health clinic, or order a home test kit at www.atomohivtest.com.

Around 800 people are diagnosed with HIV in Australia each year. If you are concerned or think that you have been at risk of HIV, then you should get tested.

Is there treatment for HIV?

Yes. It is called Antiretroviral Therapy (ART). The treatment is simple and effective but not a cure. Early testing and treatment can:

- Prevent HIV progressing to AIDS.
- Reduce HIV in your body to a very low level, even undetectable.
- Reduce the chance of passing HIV on to other people.
- Help you to live a longer and healthier life.



Successful treatment can greatly reduce HIV in the body to a level where current tests cannot detect HIV. This is called an '**undetectable viral load**'. People with a consistently undetectable viral load cannot transmit HIV by sexual contact, but they are not cured. If treatment is stopped, the virus will increase again. It is very important to continue treatment to maintain an undetectable viral load.

Only GPs with HIV training and specialists can provide HIV treatment. You can find a GP who can prescribe HIV medicine at www.ashm.org.au.



How do I protect myself?

There is no vaccination for HIV. It is very important to use the following methods to protect you and others:

- Use condoms to prevent HIV. Condoms can also prevent sexually transmissible infections (STIs) and pregnancy.
- Avoid direct blood to blood contact.