



HIV AND AIDS



OVERVIEW

HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus. It is the virus that causes AIDS or Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome. When a person is infected with HIV the virus infects and can kill certain cells in the immune system called T-helper cells. This weakens the immune system so that other opportunistic infections can occur. HIV has no cure, but with proper precautions HIV can be easily prevented.

TRANSMISSION

- Infectious levels of the virus are found in four fluids
 - Blood
 - Semen
 - Vaginal Fluid
 - Breast Milk
- Spread through:
 - Sexual contact
 - Contact with infected blood
 - Infected mother-to-baby transmission

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

- Often no symptoms
- Fever, weight loss, swollen lymph glands in the neck, under arms or groin, white patches in the mouth (thrush), certain cancers (Kaposi's sarcoma, certain lymphomas, certain invasive cervical cancers), and infections (pneumocystis pneumonia, certain types of meningitis, toxoplasmosis, certain blood infections, tuberculosis, etc.).
- Antibody blood test looks for HIV infection
- The HIV-infected person is said to have AIDS when they become sick with other specific infections and the number of T-helper cells has dropped below 200.

TREATMENT

- No cure
- Medications to decrease virus multiplication
- Medications to treat the infections and cancers associated with AIDS

PREVENTION

- Abstain from sex
- Be monogamous (have sex with one uninfected partner who only has sex with you)
- Use condoms correctly and every time you have sex
- Never share needles for injection drugs, tattoos, piercing, etc.
- Using anti-HIV medications while pregnant can decrease the chance of passing infection to the fetus