HIV Prevention

Human immunodeficiency (ih-mew-no-dee-FISH-en-cee) virus, or HIV, causes many health problems. HIV attacks the immune system. When the immune system is weak, it does not do a good job of fighting infection.

HIV can only live inside the body. It is spread through sexual contact between an infected person and an uninfected person. It can also be spread through injection drug use, especially when people share supplies and needles. HIV is passed to another person when blood, semen, vaginal fluids or breastmilk that contains HIV gets into that person's body.

To prevent contracting HIV:

• Wear a condom the right way during all sexual activities.
• Do not share needles, syringes, or anything used to prepare injection drugs.
• Ask your doctor about PrEP. PrEP is a pill you take one time each day to prevent HIV. It is for people who are at a high risk for getting HIV.

Everyone ages 13 to 64 should be tested at least one time for HIV. People who are at higher risk for contracting HIV should be tested regularly.

You may be at higher risk for HIV if you are:

• a man who has sex with men
• have multiple sex partners
• have unprotected vaginal or anal sex with someone with HIV
• you inject drugs

If you are a pregnant woman with HIV, take your HIV medicine and see your HIV doctor. This can help protect your baby from getting HIV.

If your sexual partner has HIV, remind them to take their HIV medicines. When your partner takes their medicines, they are less likely to pass the virus on to you.
Staying safe

You cannot spread HIV through casual contact. This includes hugging, shaking hands or on a toilet seat.

- If you have another sexually transmitted infection (STI), you are at a higher risk for contracting HIV.
- Treat any other STIs that you have and have regular testing for STIs and HIV.
- If you take PrEP it is very important to take your medicine every day.
- Taking PrEP as directed by your health care provider reduces the risk of contracting HIV through sex by 99 percent. It reduces the risk of contracting HIV through injecting drugs by about 74 percent.

More information

- If you have any questions about HIV or if you would like to make an appointment for PrEP, call the Nationwide Children's Hospital Family AIDS Clinic and Education Services (FACES) Program at 614-722-6060.

- For more information about PrEP, call the CDC PrEPline at 1-855-448-7737. They are open 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. ET, Monday through Friday. You may also visit https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/basics/prep.html or call the Nationwide Children's FACES Clinic at 614-722-6060.