

Frequently Asked Questions

Learn the facts about HIV — quick, clear, and easy to understand.

Understanding HIV & AIDS

What is HIV?

It's a virus that weakens the immune system. It is incurable as at today however, modern medicine makes it possible for people living with HIV to live full, healthy lives.

How is HIV different from AIDS?

AIDS is the more advanced stage of HIV that occurs if a person living with HIV is not on treatment and the immune system becomes severely weakened. It could be fatal.

How is HIV spread?

It travels through specific body fluids like blood, semen, vaginal fluid, rectal fluid and breast milk. Usually, that happens through unprotected sex, sharing needles or child birth.

Who can get HIV?

Anyone. It doesn't target specific groups, so staying informed and getting tested is a smart move for everyone.

How disproportionate is HIV's impact on ACB communities in Canada?

The numbers are striking — ACB people make up about 3–4% of Canada's population, yet account for 27.6% of all new HIV diagnoses.

Do ACB individuals receive appropriate HIV care?

Not always. Barriers like a lack of culturally sensitive care, language gaps, systemic bias and stigma often lead to inadequate testing, missed treatment chances and delayed linkage to care.

Transmission & Prevention

Can I get HIV from kissing, hugging, or touching?

Nope! You can't get HIV from standard, casual contact like handshakes, hugs, or kissing.

Do condoms make me completely safe?

The effectiveness of condoms in preventing HIV ranges from 69% to 94% when used consistently and correctly.

Can HIV be transmitted through oral sex?

It's possible, but the risk is way lower than other forms of sex. Using protection still helps keep those odds even smaller.

What is PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis)?

PrEP is an effective medication for HIV-negative people that drastically lowers the chance of contracting the virus.

Testing & Status

Can you tell if someone has HIV just by looking at them?

Not at all. You can't see the virus, and the only way to know for sure is to get tested.

Why is HIV testing important?

It's the best way to catch things early. Early treatment keeps you healthy and makes it much harder to pass the virus to others.

Take Action: Get Tested

Regular HIV testing is one of the simplest and most important steps you can take for your health and your community. Knowing your status helps you stay informed, stay protected, and support a healthier community for everyone. You can get tested at family clinics, STI clinics or at a verified anonymous testing site.

GET TESTED TODAY!

Stay Informed

Knowing your HIV status means you have the information you need to make the best decisions for your health.

Stay Protected

Early treatment helps people living with HIV stay healthy and reduces the risk of passing HIV to others.

Support Your Community

When everyone knows their status, we all contribute to a healthier, better-informed community for everyone.

References

The following sources were consulted in the development of this FAQ resource.

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