

WHAT IS HIV?

HIV - Human Immunodeficiency Virus

AIDS - Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

HIV is the virus that causes AIDS. It is transmitted through blood and other bodily fluids such as semen and breast milk. If you have unprotected sex, use intravenous drugs or share needles, you are at a higher risk of contracting HIV. Pregnant women can also pass the HIV virus to their babies.

Tests screen for HIV antibodies in your body. If you have contracted the HIV virus, your body will produce antibodies in an attempt to fight it off. Most people develop these antibodies within 3 to 6 months of infection.

If the test finds these antibodies, you definitely have HIV. If you take an HIV test earlier than 3 months after exposure to the virus, you might get an unclear test result - because you may not have developed the HIV antibodies yet. That's why it's important to get tested more than once if you feel you may have been exposed to HIV.

Helpful Information

[Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\) https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/default.html](https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/default.html)

[AIDS InfoNet – Fact sheets http://www.aidsinfonet.org/categories](http://www.aidsinfonet.org/categories)

