



### BASIC INFORMATION

#### DESCRIPTION

A major failure of the body's immune system (immunodeficiency). This decreases the body's ability to fight infection and suppress multiplication of abnormal cells, such as cancer. It affects the immune system, including special blood cells (lymphocytes) and cells of the organs (bone marrow, spleen, liver and lymph glands). These cells manufacture antibodies to protect against disease and cancer. AIDS is a secondary immunodeficiency syndrome resulting from HIV infection.

#### FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Initial infection with HIV may produce no symptoms.
- Fatigue.
- Unexplained weight loss.
- Recurrent respiratory and skin infections.
- Fever.
- Swollen lymph glands throughout the body.
- Genital changes.
- Enlarged spleen.
- Diarrhea.
- Mouth sores.
- Night sweats.

#### CAUSES

- HIV (human immunodeficiency virus), a virus (retrovirus) that invades and destroys cells of the immune system, resulting in lowered resistance to infections and some types of cancer. The virus is transmitted by:
  - Sexual contact among infected persons.
  - Use of contaminated needles for intravenous drug use.
  - Transfusions of blood or blood products from a person with acquired immune deficiency syndrome (rare).
  - Children born to an HIV infected mother.
- Note: Usual non-sexual contact does not transmit the disease, so a person with HIV infection is not a risk to the general population.

#### RISK INCREASES WITH

- Multiple homosexual male sexual partners.
- Multiple heterosexual partners (less likely).
- Exposure of hospital workers and laboratory technicians to blood, feces and urine of HIV positive patients. Greatest risk is with an accidental needle injury.
- Infants born to mothers with HIV infection.
- Intravenous drug abuse.

#### PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Avoid sexual contact with affected persons or known intravenous drug users.
- Sexual activity should be restricted to partners whose sexual histories are known.
- Use condoms for vaginal and anal intercourse (effectiveness is not proved, but their consistent use may reduce transmission).
- The risk of oral sex is not fully known. Ejaculation into the mouth should be avoided.
- Avoid intravenous self-administered drugs. Do not share unsterilized needles.

- Avoid unscreened blood products (some foreign countries may not test the blood as the USA does).
- Infected people or those in risk groups are advised not to donate blood, sperm, organs or tissue.

#### EXPECTED OUTCOME

This condition is currently considered incurable. However, symptoms can be relieved or controlled and scientific research into causes and treatment continues. AIDS may not develop for years following a positive HIV test. Once ill, survival averages 2-1/2 years, but may be shorter or longer.

#### POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Serious infection in various body systems.
- Cancer.
- Death.



### TREATMENT

#### GENERAL MEASURES

- Laboratory blood studies of blood cells and HIV antibodies test (may not become positive for 6 months after contact).
- Psychotherapy or counseling to cope with anxiety and depression about having the disease and the likelihood of death.
- Hospitalization. Medical schools may provide some free care if you are willing to participate in research.
- Early diagnosis is helpful. If you are at risk, obtain a medical evaluation even if you feel well.
- Contact social agencies in your area about AIDS support groups.
- Avoid exposure to infections.
- Additional information is available from the National AIDS Hotline (800) 342-2437; Spanish (800) 342-7432.

#### MEDICATION

- Drugs are currently not effective in curing HIV or AIDS. Antibiotics may be prescribed to prevent infections or control them as they develop.
- Several antiviral drugs (e.g., zidovudine and acyclovir) are used for patients with HIV or AIDS and may slow the progression.
- Research continues into new drugs, treatment methods, and possible vaccine against HIV.

#### ACTIVITY

- No restrictions on normal activity.
- Get adequate rest, but an exercise routine is recommended.

#### DIET

- Maintain good nutrition. Malabsorption, altered metabolism and weight loss are common among patients.
- Avoid raw eggs, unpasteurized milk or other potentially contaminated foods.



### NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has symptoms of HIV infection.
- Infection occurs after diagnosis. Symptoms include fever, cough, diarrhea.
- New symptoms develop. Drugs used in treatment have many side effects.