

FACTS ABOUT HIV

1. How do I get HIV?

There are four ways HIV is passed from person to person:

- **Sexual intercourse** (vaginal and anal): HIV may enter the body through cuts and sores (many of which are too small to notice) during sex. Vaginal and anal intercourse are considered to be high-risk practices.
- **Oral sex** (mouth-penis, mouth-vagina, mouth-anus): Although the mouth is not a good environment for HIV to spread and the risk of oral HIV transmission is lower than the risk of transmission through sexual intercourse, there is still a risk. Oral sex is considered to be a lower risk practice than sexual intercourse.
- **Sharing injection needles:** Any needle used to break the skin can transmit HIV. This includes sharing needles for using drugs and for giving home-made tattoos. Sharing needles is considered a high-risk practice.
- **Mother to child:** It is possible for a woman with HIV to pass the virus to her baby before or during birth or through breast-feeding. Breast milk can contain enough of the HIV virus to infect an infant. The risk of a mother transmitting HIV to her baby is about 30% UNLESS she gets good prenatal care and starts taking medication. If the mom gets good care, she can reduce the likelihood of her baby being infected down to 2%.

2. How do I know if I have HIV?

Get tested! People can have HIV for 10 years or more and never show any sign of being sick. Other people can get symptoms within a short time after being infected. The only way you can tell if you have HIV is to get an HIV test. Free or low-cost HIV testing is available in most communities. Find a local testing location by calling the Ohio HIV/AIDS/STD Hotline at 800-332-2437.

3. How can I protect myself and others from getting HIV?

- **Using a barrier is important every time you have sex even if your partner has an undetectable HIV viral load.** If a viral load test doesn't show a detectable amount of HIV in a person's blood, it is still important to practice safer sex with a partner because the virus can hide out in the body and may be present in other body fluids.
- **Do not share personal items** that may have even small amounts of blood on them (e.g., toothbrushes, razors, etc.).
- **Protect your baby.** If you think you are pregnant, please consider an HIV test so you and your baby can be healthy! Prenatal care is important for a healthy baby, and an HIV test is a smart part of prenatal care.



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www.odh.ohio.gov/odhprograms/hastpac/hivcare/aids1.aspx