

AIDS

“AIDS” stands for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. *Acquired* means that you don’t start out with it. You get it from somewhere. A person’s *immune* system is what helps the body fight off sickness and disease. *Deficiency* means that you are lacking something. Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome means that you have an illness that has hurt your immune system. You are no longer able to fight off other sicknesses. It is usually one of these other sicknesses that a person with AIDS dies from. There is no cure for AIDS. There are no shots or medicine to take to keep from getting AIDS.

AIDS



How do you get AIDS?

We still don’t know where AIDS came from. We do know that a virus called HIV causes AIDS. We know that it is passed from person to person. AIDS is spread by:

- sexual contact
- exchange of body fluids
- sharing needles

AIDS does not come from air, water, mosquitoes, bathrooms, casual touching or hugging.

How can you lower your risk of getting AIDS?

If you have sex, PRACTICE SAFER SEX.

- Use a condom so that no body fluids are exchanged (go from one person to the other).
- Have sex with only one partner.
- Do not trust your partner just because your partner says he/she does not have HIV or AIDS.

You can have the disease for years before you are sick.

And, not all people tell the truth.

- DO NOT SHARE NEEDLES! It is best not to do drugs or use needles at all.

Signs of AIDS

Remember most people don’t show any signs at first. As the disease grows worse, you might:

- be tired for several weeks
- have a fever or night sweats for more than a week
- lose weight without trying
- have swollen glands for more than a week
- have bruises or bumps on the skin
- lose your appetite

How can you find out if you have AIDS?

You can be tested. But you could have the HIV virus for a year or more before it shows up on a test. This is why it is important to reduce your risks and practice safer sex. For information on AIDS testing:

- Call a health clinic near you. All tests are private. Call the AIDS information hotline 1-800-342-AIDS (1-800-342-2437). This is a toll free number. THE CALL IS FREE! They can give you more information on AIDS. They can also tell you more about the tests and where to go for them. ■

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