

HEPATITIS B

GONORRHEA

SYPHILIS



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SYPHI

CHI

HEPATITIS C

CHLAMYDIA

**LET'S TALK**

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# **Being Safe Means Protection**

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*Protect yourself. Protect others.*

# ***Know the facts.***

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), an estimated 1.2 million people in the United States are living with HIV. Each year, about 50,000 more people get HIV.

***Remember: Your actions can protect your own health and the health of others.***

Thanks to new medicines, you can live longer with HIV, and you can have a better quality of life. But it is also important to make choices that keep you healthy and protect others.

You and your partners are safer when you:

- Take your HIV medicines as your medical provider tells you
- Use condoms during any and every sexual activity
- Do not share needles or works
- Talk to your sex partners about how to keep from getting HIV.

## ***Don't put yourself at risk.***

HIV infection can weaken your body's ability to defend itself against other infections. So if you get another infection, it can harm your health.

Having unsafe sex—that is, having sex without a condom—puts you at risk of getting other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). These STDs include syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia, and hepatitis B or C.

Using unclean needles or works also puts you at risk for getting hepatitis.

Keeping yourself safe helps to keep you healthy.


## ***Protect yourself. Protect others.***

HIV is measured by the levels of HIV in your blood—also called your viral load. The higher your viral load, the higher the risk that you will pass on the virus to someone else.

HIV lives in all your body fluids and may be found in blood, semen, fluids in your vagina or anus, and breast milk. You can help stop the spread of HIV by not letting others come into contact with your body fluids.

# Practice safer s

It's important to always practice safe sex—and to know which sexual behaviors are more or less likely to spread HIV. The chart below can be used as a guideline.

<b>Little to No Risk</b> 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Abstinence</li><li>• Masturbation</li><li>• Kissing (closed mouth or deep/French)*</li><li>• Play with sex toys (not shared)</li><li>• Outercourse</li><li>• Oral sex (except getting fellatio with ejaculation)</li><li>• Fingering and fisting*</li><li>• Mutual masturbation*</li><li>• Watersports*</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Getting fellatio with ejaculation</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Receptive vaginal sex with a condom</li><li>• Insertive vaginal sex with a condom</li><li>• Receptive anal sex with a condom</li></ul>

\* Assumes intact skin with no active bleeding, open cuts, ulcers, or sores.

# ex.

Not having sex is the best way to protect yourself from getting other STDs and spreading HIV. But if you are having sex, it is important to use a condom.

		Highest Risk
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Receptive vaginal sex with no condom</li><li>• Insertive vaginal sex with no condom</li><li>• Receptive anal sex with no condom</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Insertive anal sex with a condom</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Insertive anal sex with no condom</li></ul>

## ***Be mindful of STDs...including hepatitis C***

If you have HIV and you also have hepatitis C or syphilis or gonorrhea, your HIV can be more easily passed on to someone else. And it is more difficult for you to stay healthy.

**For example, hepatitis C is a disease that harms your liver.** If you have hepatitis C and HIV at the same time, the harm to your liver may be greater and may have long-term serious effects. And having syphilis or gonorrhea at the same time as HIV can increase your HIV viral load. This can make it harder for your HIV medicines to work and can make you more likely to get sick.

**And consider this:** both syphilis and gonorrhea are becoming resistant to many antibiotics. That means fewer medicines work against these two STDs, which makes them much harder to treat.

If you have HIV, you may be tested for STDs and other infections every year, or even as often as every 3 months. You and your medical provider will decide the best way to check for these diseases.

Remember, if you are living with HIV, getting an STD is dangerous to your health. And now, syphilis and gonorrhea are harder to treat because there are fewer drugs that will work against them. So please take care of yourself and your partner.

More information is available at  
[www.cdc.gov/std](http://www.cdc.gov/std)

## ***Even people with low viral loads can spread HIV to others.***

If you have HIV, there is a risk of giving it to others through unsafe actions. And the higher your viral load, the greater the risk.

But HIV can live in your body fluids even when your viral load is low. So it's possible to still give the virus to others who come in contact with your body fluids.

## ***Take your medicines: every pill, every day.***

It's very important for you to take your HIV medicines exactly as directed. If you don't, they may not be able to bring down your viral load. If that happens, it will be harder for you to stay healthy.

Also, if you don't take your medicines as directed, your HIV virus may become resistant to them. That means the medicines won't help you anymore.

If your medicines are making you feel sick, tell your medical provider. Don't just stop taking them. He or she may be able to help you deal with side effects and feel better.



## *Try these tips.*

Not having sex is the best way to protect yourself from getting other STDs or spreading HIV. But if you are having sex, here are some ways to keep you and your partner safe.

- ❑ Use condoms during every sexual activity. (Includes anal, oral, and vaginal sex)
- ❑ Make condom use a shared responsibility. (Example: say “Let’s use a condom” instead of “Put on a condom”)
- ❑ Keep condoms handy (and in more than one place) so you are ready “in the moment.” (Examples: night stand, car, purse, and medicine cabinet)
- ❑ If you use lubricants, make sure they are water-based. (Oil-based lubricants can break down the latex in a condom)
- ❑ Do not share needles or works—or even razors and toothbrushes. (Anything that may have blood on it can transmit HIV and some STDs)
- ❑ Take your HIV medicines exactly as directed (every pill, every day). (If you don’t, the virus can be transmitted more easily or become resistant)
- ❑ Ask your medical provider about PEP (post-exposure prophylaxis) and PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis). PEP and PrEP are HIV prevention options for your HIV-negative partners.

# Glossary

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**AIDS:** Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome. AIDS is a disease that causes a weak immune system. AIDS increases the risk of getting certain infections and cancers.

**CD4 count:** A blood test that measures the T-lymphocyte, or CD4, count. These cells are part of your immune system. As your CD4 count goes down, your risk of developing infections goes up. The goal of HIV medicines is to help protect your CD4 cells and keep your CD4 count up.

**Chlamydia:** A sexually transmitted disease caused by bacteria. If not treated with the appropriate medicines, chlamydia can lead to infertility (not being able to have a baby). It can be passed from mother to baby during birth.

**Genital herpes:** A sexually transmitted disease caused by a virus. The sores associated with herpes are highly contagious. The virus can also be spread when no sores can be seen.

**Gonorrhea:** A sexually transmitted disease that affects the genital area and urinary tract. You can have gonorrhea without any symptoms.

**Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C:** Viruses that affect the liver. They spread through blood and other body fluids through unsafe sex or sharing needles and drug works. An infected mother can pass these viruses to her baby during birth.

**HIV:** Human immunodeficiency virus. HIV is the virus that can lead to AIDS. Having HIV doesn't mean a person has AIDS.

**Immune system:** The body's defense against infection and disease.

**PEP (post-exposure prophylaxis):** Medicine taken by HIV negative persons within 72 hours of exposure to HIV to reduce the chance of infection. The medicine is taken for 4 weeks.

**PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis):** Medicine taken by HIV negative persons who are at high risk of both exposure to and infection with HIV. The medicine is taken every day for as long as the risk for HIV infection is present.

**Syphilis:** A sexually transmitted disease. If left untreated, syphilis can cause heart and brain damage, paralysis, blindness, and possibly death.

**Viral load:** Refers to the amount of HIV in your blood. Having a low viral load protects your immune system and keeps you healthy. The goal of HIV medicines is to help lower your viral load.

**Works:** Drug equipment such as needles, syringes, spoons, filters, cottons, water, swabs, and tourniquets.

***For more information on  
protecting yourself and others:***

Contact CDC-INFO online at <http://www.cdc.gov/cdc-info/>  
or call 800-CDC-INFO (232-4636) (TTY: 888-232-6348)  
Monday to Friday 8:00 am to 8:00 pm ET

**Your call is free and private.**

You can also find lots more information about  
HIV at

**[www.cdc.gov/actagainstaids](http://www.cdc.gov/actagainstaids)**

and

**[www.cdc.HIV](http://www.cdc.HIV)**

**ACT**  
against  
**AIDS**

PREVENTION  
IS CARE

*Protect Yourself. Protect Others.*