

# How Do You Get HIV or AIDS?

## HIV CAN BE TRANSMITTED THROUGH...



**Sexual Contact**



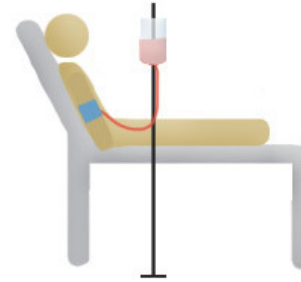
**Injection Drug Use**



**Pregnancy, Childbirth & Breast Feeding**



**Occupational Exposure**



**and rarely,  
Blood Transfusion/Organ Transplant**

## How Is HIV Spread?

HIV is spread from an infected person to another person through direct contact with some of the body's fluids. It is not spread easily. Only certain body fluids from an HIV-infected person can transmit HIV:

- Blood
- Semen (cum)
- Pre-seminal fluid (pre-cum)
- Rectal fluids
- Vaginal fluids
- Breast milk

These body fluids must come into contact with a mucous membrane or damaged tissue or be directly injected into your bloodstream (by a needle or syringe) for transmission to possibly occur. Mucous membranes are the soft, moist areas just inside the openings to your body. They can be found inside the rectum, the vagina or the opening of the penis, and the mouth.

If you think you may have been exposed to HIV, get tested. You can get tested at your healthcare provider's office, a clinic, and other locations. You can also get a HIV home test kit from your local pharmacy. Use the AIDS.gov [HIV Testing and Care Services Locator](http://AIDS.gov/HIV_Testing_and_Care_Services_Locator) to find a testing site near you.

***In Ohio call the HIV/STD hotline for any additional questions or help you may need: 1-800-332-2437***

Provided by:



Sidney-Shelby County  
Health Department  
www.shelbycountyhealthdept.org  
Ph: 937-498-7249 Fax: 937-498-7013

# Ways HIV Is Transmitted

**In the United States, HIV is spread mainly by:**

- **Having sex with someone who has HIV. In general:**
- Anal sex is the highest-risk sexual behavior. Receptive anal sex (“bottoming”) is riskier than insertive anal sex (“topping”).
- Vaginal sex is the second highest-risk sexual behavior.
- Having multiple sex partners or having sexually transmitted infections can increase the risk of HIV infection through sex.
- **Sharing needles, syringes, rinse water, or other equipment (“works”) used to prepare injection drugs with someone who has HIV.**
- **Less commonly, HIV may be spread by:**
- Being born to an infected mother. HIV can be passed from mother to child during pregnancy, birth, or breastfeeding.
- Being stuck with an HIV-contaminated needle or other sharp object. This is a risk mainly for health care workers.
- Receiving blood transfusions, blood products, or organ/tissue transplants that are contaminated with HIV. This risk is extremely small because of rigorous testing of the US blood supply and donated organs and tissues.
- Eating food that has been pre-chewed by an HIV-infected person. The contamination occurs when infected blood from a caregiver’s mouth mixes with food while chewing, and is very rare.
- Being bitten by a person with HIV. Each of the very small number of documented cases has involved severe trauma with extensive tissue damage and the presence of blood. There is no risk of transmission if the skin is not broken.
- Oral sex—using the mouth to stimulate the penis, vagina, or anus (fellatio, cunnilingus, and rimming). Giving fellatio (mouth to penis oral sex) and having the person ejaculate (cum) in your mouth is riskier than other types of oral sex.
- Contact between broken skin, wounds, or mucous membranes and HIV-infected blood or blood-contaminated body fluids. These reports have also been extremely rare.
- Deep, open-mouth kissing if the person with HIV has sores or bleeding gums and blood is exchanged. HIV is not spread through saliva. Transmission through kissing alone is extremely rare.

**HIV is NOT spread by:**

- Air or water
- Insects, including mosquitoes or ticks
- Saliva, tears, or sweat
- Casual contact, like shaking hands, hugging or sharing dishes/drinking glasses
- Drinking fountains
- Toilet seats

**HIV is not spread through the air and it does not live long outside the human body.**

People with HIV who are using *antiretroviral therapy* (ART) consistently and who have achieved viral suppression (having the virus reduced to an undetectable level in the body) are very unlikely to transmit the virus to their uninfected partners. However, there is still some risk of transmission, so even with an undetectable viral load, people with HIV should continue to [take steps to reduce HIV transmission](#).

## If I Have HIV, Does That Mean I Have AIDS?

**No.** The terms “HIV” and “AIDS” can be confusing because both terms refer to the same disease. However, “HIV” refers to the virus itself, and “AIDS” refers to the [late stage of HIV infection](#), when an HIV-infected person’s immune system is severely damaged and has difficulty fighting diseases and certain cancers. Before the development of certain medications, people with HIV could progress to AIDS in just a few years. But today, most people who are HIV-positive do not progress to AIDS. That’s because if you have HIV and you take ART consistently, you can keep the level of HIV in your body low. This will help keep your body strong and healthy and reduce the likelihood that you will ever progress to AIDS. It will also help lower your risk of transmitting HIV to others.

For more information about the difference between HIV and AIDS, see <https://www.aids.gov/hiv-aids-basics> Information Last revised: 08/27/2015