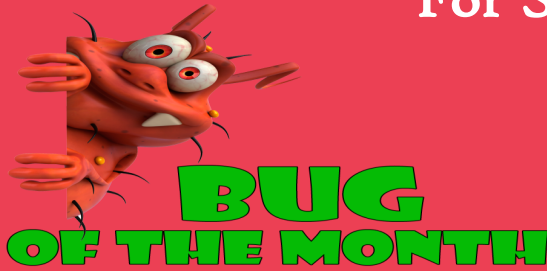


## For Staff /Patient Education



# HIV / AIDS

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### What is it?

- The Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is a lentivirus (slowly replicating retrovirus) that causes the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS).
- HIV affects specific cells of the immune system, called CD4 cells, or T cells. Over time, HIV can destroy so many of these cells that the body can't fight off infections and disease. When this happens, HIV infection leads to AIDS.
- Unlike some other viruses, the human body cannot get rid of HIV. That means that once you have HIV, you have it for life. No safe and effective cure currently exists, but scientists are working hard to find one, and remain hopeful.
- Meanwhile, with proper medical care, HIV can be controlled. Treatment for HIV is often called antiretroviral therapy or ART. It can dramatically prolong the lives of many people infected with HIV and lower their chance of infecting others.

### How is it spread?

- Only certain fluids—blood, semen (*cum*), pre-seminal fluid (*pre-cum*), rectal fluids, vaginal fluids, and breast milk—from an HIV-infected person can transmit HIV.
- These fluids must come in contact with a mucous membrane or damaged tissue or be directly injected into the bloodstream (from a needle or syringe) for transmission to possibly occur. Mucous membranes can be found inside the rectum, the vagina, the opening of the penis, and the mouth.
- The most common way to get HIV is by having unprotected sex with a person who has HIV.
- Sharing drug injection equipment (such as needles and syringes) with a person who has HIV.
- From infected woman to her child during pregnancy, childbirth (delivery), or breastfeeding.
- In the past, some people were infected with HIV after receiving a blood transfusion or organ transplant from an HIV-infected donor. Today, this risk is very low because the supply of donated blood and organs is carefully tested

### Where is it found?

- HIV is found only in body fluids.

### Prevention & Control:

- Standard precautions for all patients with suspected or confirmed HIV. Safe handling & disposal of sharps.
- Proper disinfection/sterilization of instruments/equipments.
- Not having sex is the most effective way to prevent HIV. If you are sexually active: Choose one partner and agree to be sexually active only with each other. If you have more than one sexual partner, get tested for HIV regularly. Limit your number of sexual partners, fewer partners you have, the less likely you are to have sex with someone who is infected with HIV or another STI. Use condoms correctly, every time you have sex.
- Don't inject drugs. But if you do, use only sterile needles/equipment & don't share your equipment with others.
- There is currently NO vaccine to prevent HIV Infection. If you are living with HIV, antiretroviral therapy (ART) reduces the amount of virus (viral load) in your blood and body fluids. You should also be aware that your partners may benefit from pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), daily medicine to prevent HIV for people at ongoing risk, or post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP), a 4-week course of medicine to prevent HIV after possible exposure during a single event.



#### For more information contact:

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#### Source:

CDC- What is HIV/AIDS?-HIV Basics-HIV/AIDS  
(<http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/basics/whatishiv.html>)



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LBC