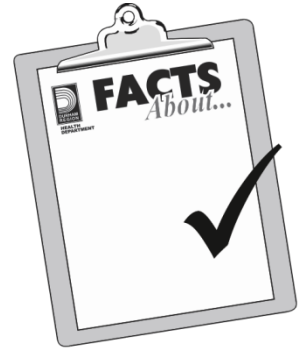




FACTS

About...



HEALTH DEPARTMENT

HIV/AIDS

What is it?

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is a virus that slowly destroys the body's ability to fight illness. HIV is the virus that causes AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) which is the term used for the most advanced stages of HIV.

HIV/AIDS is a reportable infection and must be reported to the Health Department.

How is it spread?

- HIV is found in blood, semen, vaginal secretions and breastmilk of an infected person.
- HIV is spread by unprotected (vaginal, oral and anal) sexual contact with an infected partner.
- HIV is also spread by sharing contaminated needles and syringes and with non-sterile instruments that enter the body (e.g., tattooing or skin piercing equipment).
- A woman infected with HIV can pass the virus on to her baby during pregnancy, birth, and during breastfeeding.

You cannot get HIV from saliva, tears, coughing or sneezing, sharing the same drinking fountain, from a swimming pool, toilet seat, by shaking hands, hugging, or eating food that has been prepared by someone infected with the virus. You can't get HIV from any insect bite.

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For more information

Durham Region Health Department

905-666-6241 1-800-841-2729 durham.ca

If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.



What do I look for?

Time from HIV exposure to the start of symptoms is usually two to four weeks. Symptoms may include fever, swollen lymph nodes, headache, tiredness, sore throat, vomiting and diarrhea.

Persistent and severe symptoms may signal the onset of AIDS and may not occur for years. Symptoms of AIDS include weight loss, sores, vision loss, recurrent pneumonia, cancer and damage to the nervous system. For women, recurrent yeast infections and abnormalities on pap tests can occur.

How is it treated?

HIV is treated with medications to prevent the virus from growing, which reduces the amount of HIV in your body. Having less HIV in your body gives your immune system a chance to recover and fight off infections and cancers. There is no cure for HIV.

How can I protect myself?

- Abstain from sex or use condoms when you have sex.
- Do not share needles or drug equipment and use a new needle each time. New, clean needles and injection equipment are available through the John Howard Society of Durham Region needle exchange program.
- If you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant, talk to your health care provider. A pregnant woman with HIV can take medications to decrease the chance of infecting her baby.
- If you are engaging in unprotected sex with people who are HIV positive or at risk of HIV, PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) can be taken to help prevent transmission.
- If you are exposed to blood seek medical attention immediately. PEP (post-exposure prophylaxis) is available to help prevent transmission if taken within 72 hours of exposure.
- HIV blood tests are available at your doctor's office, sexual health clinics or anonymous HIV-testing sites. Test results are confidential.

November 7, 2019

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