



## ADVICE AND FACTS ABOUT SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS

DET HÄR ÄR EN ÖVERSÄTTNING TILL ENGELSKA AV FAKTABLADET RÅD OCH FAKTA OM SEXUELLT ÖVERFÖRDA INFEKTIONER – HIV.

# HIV

HIV infection, or HIV as the disease is normally known, is caused by a virus. HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus. HIV can be transmitted via unprotected vaginal or anal intercourse. The virus can sometimes be transmitted via unprotected oral sex, especially if you get sperm in your mouth and there are wounds or sores on the oral mucosa. You can also contract HIV via blood if you use drugs and share syringes and needles with someone who carries the virus.

### Symptoms of HIV

In the beginning, you will not necessarily perceive any problems if you have contracted HIV. Some experience a sore throat, fever, swollen lymph glands or rashes on the body. The symptoms occur in such cases roughly one to four weeks after infection. This is known as primary infection. Symptoms can be similar to those of influenza and normally disappear after a week or so. However, the infection continues, undetected, to weaken the body's immune system. The disease is especially infectious during the first months after infection. At this point, before the immune system has had time to react, the viral load is very high, regardless of whether or not you develop symptoms.

### Get tested for HIV

Testing for HIV is free as it is covered in the Communicable Diseases Act. You can be tested for HIV by providing a blood sample and it is possible to be tested anonymously if you wish. If you suspect that you have HIV, you must be tested so as to gain access to medical help and support, as well as knowledge about the infection so that you avoid transmitting HIV to others as well.

Getting tested is the only way to find out about your HIV status. The test can, depending on the type of test, detect infection in the blood at the earliest after approximately two weeks and at the latest within six to eight weeks of you being infected. If you suspect that you have been infected with HIV, then it is important that you contact medical care services as soon as possible for consultation and testing. You can find your nearest clinic on [www.1177.se](http://www.1177.se). In order to attain a definite answer, it is recommended that you get tested again six to eight weeks

after suspected transmission of the virus, if a shorter duration has elapsed when the first test was conducted. If the test shows that you have HIV, your sex partners also need to get tested.

### Treatment

There is no vaccine or cure for HIV. There is however effective medicine today that stops the progression of the disease and prevents the destruction of your immune system if administered in time, thus also preventing the development of AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome).

Successful medical treatment also means that infectiousness becomes very low, as the viral load in the blood and other bodily fluids is drastically reduced. This is true provided that you do not have any other sexually transmitted infection. Condoms must therefore always be used during intercourse in order to minimise the risk of infection and protect against venereal diseases.

As the treatment does not cure the disease, it must continue throughout the person's life. The treatment normally consists of a combination of three different medicines and can sometimes result in a number of side effects that have a negative impact on quality of life. However, there are a number of different medicines available today, which means that it is normally possible to find a combination which results in minimal negative impact. If the treatment is initiated in time, the person should anticipate largely the same life expectancy as he or she would have had without being infected by HIV.

### Important points about HIV

The best protection against contracting or transmitting HIV is to practice safe sex with condoms during intercourse and to avoid mucous membrane contact with blood and other bodily fluids that may contain viruses.

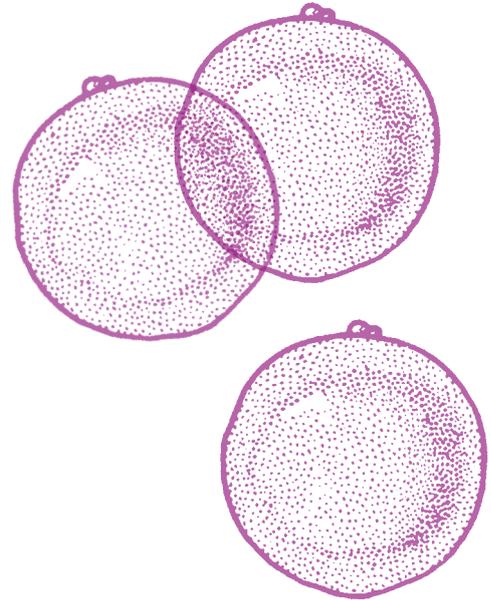
If you currently have another sexually transmitted infection, you are more likely to contract HIV if you have unprotected sex with a partner that has HIV. If you know that you have been subjected to HIV within the last day or couple of days, you must contact your local infection clinic as soon as possible for an assessment of whether or not preventive treatment against HIV (Post-Exposure Prophylaxis – PEP) can be administered so as to try to prevent the infection from taking hold.

An HIV infection does not necessarily mean that you have or will develop AIDS.

If treatment is not administered, the HIV infection breaks down the body's white blood cells, which are important to the body's immune system. Once the immune system has been severely weakened, normally after a number of years, you can have various complications. These complications can be life-threatening and are referred to using the generic term AIDS. By this stage, the viral load has also increased and thereby also the infectiousness.

To prevent the development of aids, it is important to commence treatment before your immune system has taken too much damage. It is therefore important that you do not delay in being tested if you suspect that you may have been subjected to the risk of infection with HIV. Unfortunately, there are still many people in Sweden who receive a diagnosis of HIV at such a late stage that the immune system has already been severely damaged.

All pregnant women are offered an HIV test so that treatment can commence during pregnancy and so that precautionary measures can be taken during delivery in order to reduce the risks to the child if the mother has HIV. It is very uncommon today in Sweden that a mother with HIV transmits the virus to the baby during pregnancy or in childbirth.



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