HIV/AIDS

HIV Prevention

HIV was established as the cause of AIDS in 1983. Since then, we've learned a great deal about the ways HIV can be transmitted and prevented. Today, we have an abundance of tools available to prevent HIV transmission. Even without a cure or a vaccine, we have the means to end the epidemic in the United States and around the world.

Consider the following prevention methods:

Get tested. Approximately 14 percent of people living with HIV in the United States don't know they have the virus. Know your status to protect your health—and the health of others. Click here to find out more about HIV testing.

Practice safer sex. When used correctly and consistently, condoms and lubricant can greatly reduce the risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. Click here for more info on safer sex.

Use pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP). PrEP is an HIV prevention tool in which an HIV-negative person takes antiretroviral medication to reduce the risk of contracting HIV. It is recommended that condoms be used along with PrEP. Click here for more about PrEP.

Get on HIV treatment. Treatment as prevention (TasP) involves prescribing HIV meds to those who are HIV positive in order to reduce the amount of virus in their blood (and genital fluids) so that they are less likely to transmit the virus to others. People who have an undetectable viral load have effectively no risk of transmitting the virus sexually. Click here for more info about TasP.

Reduce drug-injection risk. If you inject drugs, never share needles, syringes or other "works." If unused injection equipment is not available, be sure to clean shared needles, syringes and other works with bleach and water. Click here for more info on safer injecting.

Reduce mother-to-child transmission. If you're pregnant—or are thinking of starting a family—get tested for HIV. If you're positive, careful prenatal care, including the use of HIV meds for the mother, can reduce the risk of passing the virus on to the baby to 2 percent or less. Click here for more on preventing mother-to-child transmission.

Take post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP). PEP involves taking a short course of antiretroviral drugs, usually for a month, after a high-risk exposure. Click here for more about PEP.

Last Reviewed: November 16, 2020

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