

HIV/AIDS Symptoms

Many people do not develop symptoms after getting infected with HIV. Some people have a flu-like illness within several days to weeks after exposure to the virus. They complain of fever, headache, tiredness, and enlarged lymph glands in the neck. These symptoms usually disappear on their own within a few weeks.

- Following initial infection, you may have no symptoms. The progression of disease varies widely among individuals. This state may last from a few months to more than 10 years.
- During this period, the virus continues to multiply actively and infects and kills the cells of the immune system. The immune system allows us to fight against the bacteria, viruses, and other infectious causes.
- The virus destroys the cells that are the primary infection fighters, called CD4+ or T4 cells.

- Once the immune system weakens, a person infected with HIV can develop the following symptoms:
 - Lack of energy
 - Weight loss
 - Frequent fevers and sweats
 - Persistent or frequent yeast infections
 - Persistent skin rashes or flaky skin
 - Short-term memory loss
 - Mouth, genital, or anal sores from herpes infections.

- AIDS is the most advanced stage of HIV infection. The definition of AIDS includes all HIV-infected people who have fewer than 200 CD4+ cells per microliter of blood. The definition also includes 26 conditions that are common in advanced HIV disease but that rarely occur in healthy people. Most of these conditions are infections caused by bacteria, viruses, fungi, parasites, and other organisms. Opportunistic infections are common in people with AIDS. Nearly every organ system is affected. Some of the common symptoms include the following:
 - Cough and shortness of breath
 - Seizures and lack of coordination
 - Difficult or painful swallowing
 - Mental symptoms such as confusion and forgetfulness

- Severe and persistent diarrhea
 - Fever
 - Vision loss
 - Nausea, abdominal cramps, and vomiting
 - Weight loss and extreme fatigue
 - Severe headaches with neck stiffness
 - Coma
-
- People with AIDS are prone to develop various cancers such as Kaposi sarcoma, cervical cancer, and cancers of the immune system known as lymphomas. Kaposi sarcoma causes round, brown, reddish or purple spots that develop in the skin or in the mouth. After the diagnosis of AIDS is made, the average survival time has been estimated to be 2-3 years.

WebMD

Symptoms

The symptoms of HIV and AIDS vary, depending on the phase of infection.

Early infection

When first infected with HIV, you may have no signs or symptoms at all, although it's more common to develop a brief flu-like illness two to four weeks after becoming infected. Signs and symptoms may include:

- Fever
- Headache
- Sore throat
- Swollen lymph glands
- Rash

Even if you don't have symptoms, you're still able to transmit the virus to others. Once the virus enters your body, your own immune system also comes under attack. The virus multiplies in your lymph nodes and slowly begins to destroy your helper T cells (CD4 lymphocytes) — the white blood cells that coordinate your entire immune system.

Later infection

You may remain symptom-free for eight or nine years or more. But as the virus continues to multiply and destroy immune cells, you may develop mild infections or chronic symptoms such as:

- Swollen lymph nodes — often one of the first signs of HIV infection
- Diarrhea
- Weight loss
- Fever
- Cough and shortness of breath

Latest phase of infection

During the last phase of HIV — which occurs approximately 10 or more years after the initial infection — more serious symptoms may begin to appear, and the infection may then meet the official definition of AIDS. In 1993, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) redefined AIDS to mean the presence of HIV infection as shown by a positive HIV-antibody test plus at least one of the following:

- The development of an opportunistic infection — an infection that occurs when your immune system is impaired — such as *Pneumocystis carinii* pneumonia (PCP)
- A CD4 lymphocyte count of 200 or less — a normal count ranges from 800 to 1,200

By the time AIDS develops, your immune system has been severely damaged, making you susceptible to opportunistic infections. The signs and symptoms of some of these infections may include:

- Soaking night sweats
- Shaking chills or fever higher than 100 F (38 C) for several weeks
- Dry cough and shortness of breath
- Chronic diarrhea
- Persistent white spots or unusual lesions on your tongue or in your mouth
- Headaches
- Blurred and distorted vision
- Weight loss

You may also begin to experience signs and symptoms of later stage HIV infection itself, such as:

- Persistent, unexplained fatigue
- Soaking night sweats

- Shaking chills or fever higher than 100 F (38 C) for several weeks
- Swelling of lymph nodes for more than three months
- Chronic diarrhea
- Persistent headaches

If you're infected with HIV, you're also more likely to develop certain cancers, especially Kaposi's sarcoma, cervical cancer and lymphoma, although improved treatments have reduced the risk of these illnesses.

Mayo Clinic

How can I tell if I'm infected with HIV? What are the symptoms?

En Español

The only way to know if you are infected is to be tested for HIV infection. You cannot rely on symptoms to know whether or not you are infected. Many people who are infected with HIV do not have any symptoms at all for 10 years or more.

The following may be warning signs of advanced HIV Infection:

- rapid weight loss
- dry cough
- recurring fever or profuse night sweats
- profound and unexplained fatigue
- swollen lymph glands in the armpits, groin, or neck
- diarrhea that lasts for more than a week
- white spots or unusual blemishes on the tongue, in the mouth, or in the throat
- pneumonia
- red, brown, pink, or purplish blotches on or under the skin or inside the mouth, nose, or eyelids
- memory loss, depression, and other neurological disorders

However, no one should assume they are infected if they have any of these symptoms. Each of these symptoms can be related to other illnesses. Again, the only way to determine whether you are infected is to be tested for HIV infection. For information on where to find an HIV testing site, visit the National HIV Testing Resources Web site at <http://www.hivtest.org> or call CDC-INFO 24 Hours/Day at 1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636), 1-888-232-6348 (TTY), in English, en Español. These resources are confidential. You can also ask your health care provider to give you an HIV test.

You also cannot rely on symptoms to establish that a person has AIDS. The symptoms of AIDS are similar to the symptoms of many other illnesses. AIDS is a medical diagnosis made by a doctor based on specific criteria established by the CDC. For more information refer to the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report "1993 Revised Classification System for HIV Infection and Expanded Surveillance Case Definition for AIDS Among Adolescents and Adults" at <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/00018871.htm>.

If you would like more information or have personal concerns, call CDC- INFO 24 Hours/Day at 1-800-CDC- INFO (232-4636), 1-888-232-6348 (TTY), in English, en Español.

What are the symptoms of HIV infection?

Shortly after being infected with HIV, some people - but not all people - have flu-like symptoms (fever, muscle aches, feeling tired) that last a few days and then go away. This is sometimes called *seroconversion illness* or *acute HIV infection*. Most people with HIV have no symptoms for many years. However, even without symptoms, people who are newly infected have large amounts of HIV circulating in their blood and are highly infectious at that time.

HIV infection cannot be diagnosed from symptoms alone. The symptoms of worsening HIV infection and AIDS - swollen glands, fever, and skin rashes - can also be caused by other illnesses, many of which are more common than HIV infection. Only an HIV test can show whether a person has HIV (see Testing section).

When does a person with HIV infection have AIDS?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a person with HIV infection has AIDS when:

- the person's CD4 cell count, a way to measure the strength of the immune system, falls below 200 (a normal CD4 cell counts is 500 or higher); or
- the person develops any of the specific serious conditions - also called AIDS-defining illnesses - linked with HIV infection (see Appendix for a list of these conditions).

NYSDOH