

HIV/AIDS FACT SHEET

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is a virus that attacks the human immune system. It is a retro virus, which means its reproduction depends on using genetic material of cells it invades to produce more virus; it eventually destroy those cells. Symptoms almost never appear immediately after HIV infection is transmitted. Some individuals go 10 or more years without any indications of disease, though the virus is in the body, and they are capable of infecting others. The infections can be detected by a simple test.

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is the term describing the later stages of HIV infection when the levels of important immune system cells have dropped. Once the immune system has weakened, the individual may experience an increase in other diseases; these are known as opportunistic infections.

Drugs to limit the virus, stimulate the immune system and prevent opportunistic infections are available. Anti-retrovirals (ARVs) are common drugs used to limit the reproduction of HIV in the body. There is no cure for AIDS. Many doctors and scientists are working on an AIDS vaccine. At the same time, HIV infected persons are living longer as treatments improve.

Symptoms are often similar to those of the common cold, the flu, and other illnesses, but the difference is the severity and the length of time that symptoms last. Following infection and the breakdown of the immune system some of the following symptoms may be experienced:

- unexplained persistent fatigue
- unexplained fever, night sweats, or shaking chills that last for several weeks or more
- sudden and unexplained weight loss of more than 10 pounds
- diarrhea that continues for several weeks
- a dry cough that will not go away, often associated with shortness of breath
- purple or pink spots or bumps on or under the skin, inside the mouth, nose, or around the eyes
- white spots around or in the mouth that last for weeks
- swollen glands (in neck, groin, armpits that last for several months)

Among the 15-24 year old population in the United States AIDS is the 7th leading cause of death if accidents, homicides, and suicides are not included. Among the 25-44 year old population AIDS is the 3rd leading cause of death if accidents and suicides are not included. As the disease can take up to 10 years to develop after a person is infected, it is likely many were infected as teenagers. (2000 estimates)

Some information taken with permission from Brokenness to Wholeness: AN HIV/AIDS Prevention Curriculum from the Lutheran AIDS Network. Statistic obtained from the CDC.



Equipping Leaders Internationally
PO Box 1083
Mahomet, IL 61853
217.377.9444

Terms:

While this website is available in English only (at this time), permission for republication and distribution in different formats and translation into different languages is freely granted to community-based and not-for-profit organizations, provided the source is acknowledged and an electronic copy of any translation is supplied to ELI.

Located in Mahomet, Ill., ELI is a community-based nonprofit organization emphasizing life skills for emerging youth leaders in third world countries. ELI has been formed by Paul and Virginia who have been working with youth in United States and abroad for more than 30 years. For further information on ELI, please call (217) 377-9444.