

HIV/AIDS Fact Sheet

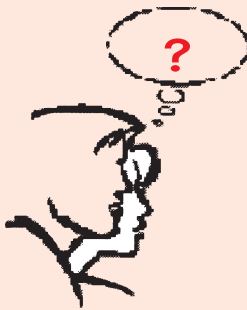


What is HIV? HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus. It is the virus that causes AIDS or Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome.

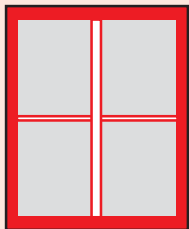


CAUTION
UNPROTECTED
SEX

How is HIV spread? HIV is a bloodborne virus—it must enter the blood stream for an infection to occur. The body fluids capable of spreading HIV are blood, semen, vaginal fluid and breast milk. Other body fluids such as tears, sweat and saliva do not carry enough virus to spread it. The major ways of getting HIV include unprotected sexual intercourse (anal, vaginal or oral sex), sharing of used needles (injection drugs, steroids, ear piercing, or tattoo needles), and from a pregnant woman to her baby. Anyone who engages in these activities can get HIV. Getting HIV has to do with engaging in risky behaviors, not whether you're gay or straight. You cannot get HIV from casual contact like shaking hands, hugging, kissing, using toilets, showers, or sharing dishes.



What about testing for HIV? People who have had unprotected sex and/or shared injection drug works should be tested for HIV antibodies. This is especially important for: (1) people with HIV-positive sex partners, (2) men who have had sex with men, (3) women or men who have had multiple partners, (4) injection drug users, (5) people who have had blood transfusions between 1975 and 1985, and (6) people who trade sex for money, food, shelter or drugs. Testing early can help manage HIV infection better. Testing can be done at your doctor's or other health care provider's office confidentially, or you may test anonymously at Snohomish Health District. For more information about testing, call 425.339.5298.



6 Weeks - 3 Months

What is the window period? When someone gets infected with HIV the body responds by making antibodies to help fight the virus. The test for HIV measures the presence of these antibodies. Antibodies can take from six weeks to three months to be detectable with a standard HIV test using blood or oral mucosal tissue. This wait is the "window period" for testing. A person who gets infected with HIV and tests before s/he has made antibodies will test negative, but will be able to infect others immediately. In fact, because viral load (the measure of HIV virus in blood, semen and vaginal fluid) is high early in infection, a newly-infected person may be **more likely** to pass the virus to sexual or needle-sharing partners.

Healthy Lifestyles, Healthy Communities



**SNOHOMISH
HEALTH
DISTRICT**

HIV/AIDS Prevention & Testing Program

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Everett, WA 98201-3900

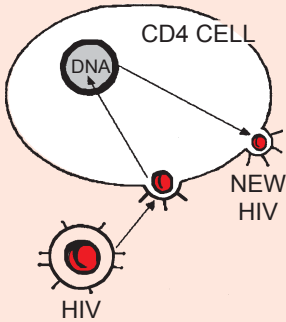
425.339.5298 FAX: 425.339.8707

WEB SITE: <http://www.snohd.org>

HIV Test Appointments: 425.339.5298



What do HIV antibody test results mean? A negative test result means that if you have not engaged in any risky behavior within the last three months, you are probably not infected with HIV. A positive result means that you have been infected with HIV and that you could pass it on to someone else. It does not tell you when you were infected, how long you have been infected, how your immune system is doing or if you have AIDS.

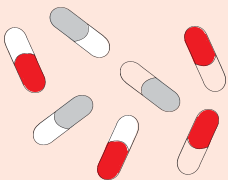


What happens when someone gets infected? Viruses must use living cells to reproduce because they cannot do so on their own. HIV targets CD4 cells (a type of T cell), an important part of the immune system. HIV turns CD4 cells into virus factories, using the cell's DNA to create thousands of new viruses which are then released to infect other CD4 cells. In the process, the CD4 cell is destroyed. As HIV infection progresses, the number of CD4 cells drops, weakening the immune system until it can no longer function properly. During "primary infection," which may occur three to six weeks after exposure, about two-thirds of newly infected people develop a flu-like illness lasting several weeks (fever, sore throat, muscle aches, swollen glands, fatigue) and may have a rash.

STAGES

- AIDS = CD4 count < 200
- HIV Positive
- Initial Infection

How is HIV different from AIDS? Once an infected person has developed detectable antibodies, s/he is considered HIV positive. HIV infected people may remain symptom free for as long as 10-15 years (or more), but this can vary from person to person. They will be diagnosed with AIDS when their CD4 count drops to 200 or below (a normal count is 800-1200 in about a teaspoon of blood) or they begin developing opportunistic infections, such as certain types of pneumonia, cancers and fungal infections that occur when the immune system is weakened.

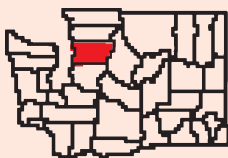


Can anything be done to slow the virus down? Monitoring HIV infection has become more important than ever. If you are HIV positive, talk to your case manager or doctor about combination drug therapies that can help reduce the amount of HIV in your blood (viral load) and may help prevent progression to AIDS. Early testing for HIV is encouraged. There is still no known cure, and treatments may not work for everyone.

Abstinence



How do you prevent HIV? HIV is preventable. HIV can be prevented by avoiding sexual activity and avoiding IV drug use or other activities that involve needles. If you choose to have sex, the use of condoms greatly reduces your risk. If you inject drugs, using new needles and not sharing works (cookers, cottons, water, etc.) eliminates your risk for HIV as well as Hepatitis B and C. If you inject and share needles, rinse the syringe with water first, bleach second, water again, and repeat the entire procedure two more times. This will reduce your risk for HIV only. If available, use clean needle exchange programs.



How common is HIV/AIDS in Snohomish County? As of December, 2008, **628** people are currently living in Snohomish County with HIV or AIDS. On average from 2003-2008, 41 new cases are reported each year. **Over 16,700** cases of HIV or AIDS have been reported in Washington State since 1982.