

Infectious Diseases

Series

1



HIV



HIV

HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, lives in blood, semen, vaginal fluids, and breast milk. You can get HIV from an infected person if one of these fluids gets inside your body during unprotected sex or through contact with infected blood, for example, by sharing needles. An infected pregnant woman can also transmit HIV to her baby. HIV is not spread through casual contact with others, nor through air, water, food, or insects. HIV damages your body's immune system, which fights infection. In time, the immune system becomes too weak to fight off infections—this stage of HIV is known as AIDS. Some people with HIV stay healthy for years, so you cannot tell by looking at someone if they have HIV. You can protect yourself from being infected by not having sex, using latex condoms if you have sex, not sharing needles for any reason, and by avoiding alcohol and other drugs that might keep you from thinking clearly. For more information, call CDC INFO at 1-800-232-4636.