



HIV

What is HIV/AIDS?

HIV stands for human immunodeficiency virus, which is a virus that attacks the immune system and destroys cells that help the body fight off infections. Therefore, HIV weakens the immune system and makes a person more vulnerable to other disease, infections or certain cancers. If HIV is left untreated, it can lead to AIDS, which stands for acquired immunodeficiency syndrome. AIDS is the most advanced stage of an HIV infection^[2].

How Does HIV Affect Me?

HIV/AIDS continues to be a persistent public health challenge for the United States and other countries around the world. While there has been improvement in enabling individuals with HIV to live longer and healthier lives, the virus still imposes a burden economically and personally. According to the CDC, in 2018 approximately 1.2 million individuals in the United States had an HIV diagnosis. Additionally, there were 37,968 new HIV diagnoses and 15,820 deaths. The statistics also indicated that HIV affects groups of people differently^[1]:

- Gay, bisexual and men who have sex with men accounted for 69% of new HIV diagnoses.
- Blacks/African Americans and Hispanics/Latinos accounted for 42% and 27%, respectively, of new HIV diagnoses.
- Individuals aged 13 to 24 years accounted for 21% of new HIV diagnoses.

How Does HIV Spread?

HIV is spread by direct contact with bodily fluids from individuals diagnosed with HIV and a detectable amount of HIV virus in their blood, called the viral load. Bodily fluids include semen or pre-seminal fluid, rectal fluid, vaginal fluid, blood or breast milk. For transmission, the bodily fluids must travel to the bloodstream of an HIV-negative individual. This occurs via a mucous membrane (rectum, vagina, mouth, tip of the penis), open cut or sore, or from injection.

Examples of ways HIV can spread includes^[2]:

- Having unprotected vaginal or anal sex with an HIV infected individual
- Exposure to HIV infected syringe, needle or other injection equipment.
- From mother to child, which can be during pregnancy, birth or breastfeeding
- Needle stick from an HIV-contaminated needle
- Having oral sex

Transmission does not occur from by day-to-day contact activities, including handshakes, hugs, kisses or sharing food and water. Additionally, individuals who take medications as prescribed and have an undetectable viral load cannot transmit HIV^[2].

What are the Risk Factors?

HIV can affect any individual, regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation or community. However, certain behaviors, populations and communities can place an individual at a higher risk of getting an HIV infection. Refer to the following chart for risk factors and risk reduction strategies^[2], ^[3]:

Groups	Higher Risk Situations	Risk Reduction Strategies
Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Living in a community with a higher percentage of HIV diagnoses – higher risk of exposure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To determine the % of HIV in your area, refer to https://www.cdc.gov/NCHHSTP/Atlas/
Populations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gay, bisexual and men who have sex with men 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inform your injection and sex partner if you have HIV* Use condoms for each act of intercourse
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blacks/African Americans and Hispanics/Latinos 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transgender women who have sex with men 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Breastfeeding mothers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not breastfeed; the virus can be passed to the baby.
Behaviors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Having anal or vaginal sex Partaking in injection drug use with syringes or needles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use condoms for each act of intercourse* Limit number of sexual partners Never share injection drug equipment, syringes or needles

*For tips on how to use condoms, visit: <https://www.hiv.va.gov/patient/daily/sex/condom-tips.asp>

If you believe you are at risk for HIV, contact your healthcare provider to determine if pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) may be right for you. If you believe you have been exposed to HIV within 3 days, contact your healthcare provider to determine if post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) immediately to prevent HIV^[2].

How is HIV Treated?

HIV treatment typically consists of a regimen with a combination of 3 or more antiretroviral (ART) medications. The ART therapy does not cure HIV, but can greatly decrease the amount of replication in the body. This allows the individual's immune system to become stronger and be able to fight off future infections and even cancer. All individuals diagnosed with HIV will be on lifelong ART therapy^[3].

How can Rx Outreach Help?

Here at Rx Outreach, we are working hard to make medications more affordable for our patients. We have many prescription medication options available for your HIV treatment needs at low costs without the need for prescription medication insurance.

Medication and Strength	Average Discounted Retail Price*	Rx Outreach Price**
Efavirenz/Emtricitabine/Tenofovir (Atripla) 600 mg/200 mg/300 mg tablet	\$739.68	\$150 for up to 30 tablets / \$75 for each add'l 30 tablets
Emtricitabine/Tenofovir (Truvada) 200 mg/300 mg tablet	\$815.65	\$45 for up to 30 tablets / \$25 for each add'l 30 tablets
Entecavir (Baraclude) 0.5 mg tablet	\$254.27	\$45 for up to 30 tablets
Entecavir (Baraclude) 1 mg tablet	\$483.49	\$45 for up to 30 tablets
Alitretinoin (Panretin) 0.1% gel 60 gram tube	\$6,035.68	\$40 per tube
Tenofovir Disoproxil Fumarate (Viread) 300 mg tablet	\$163.96	\$25 for up to 30 tablets
Zidovudine (Retrovir) 300 mg tablet	\$61.66	\$30 for up to 60 tablets

*Calculated from CVS, Walgreens and Walmart as listed on GoodRx July 9, 2021

** Listed price includes cost of shipping

Prices are subject to change, please visit <https://rxoutreach.org/find-your-medication> for the current pricing.

References

1. <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/basics/statistics.html>
2. <https://hivinfo.nih.gov>
3. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/hiv-aids>