

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

HIV | AIDS

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What you should know about HIV

HIV infection means that the human body is infected with the **human immunodeficiency virus**. This virus multiplies and destroys the immune system of the infected person in a way that after a certain period of time it can no longer protect the body against diseases. HIV infection manifests no specific symptoms. If you don't make a diagnostic test, you can be unaware of infection for even 10 - 12 years. A person not aware of living with HIV can become sick with AIDS and infect the others.



What you should know about HIV

Untreated HIV infection leads to progression of **AIDS** i.e. **acquired immunodeficiency syndrome**. AIDS is the last stage of **untreated** HIV infection. This syndrome attacks the persons infected with HIV. It includes various infections and cancer types. AIDS manifests after many years of HIV infection in persons unaware of their infection. The persons aware of the infection are covered by advanced antiretroviral therapy that prevents the occurrence of AIDS. It is worth to test yourself!

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How you can become infected with HIV?

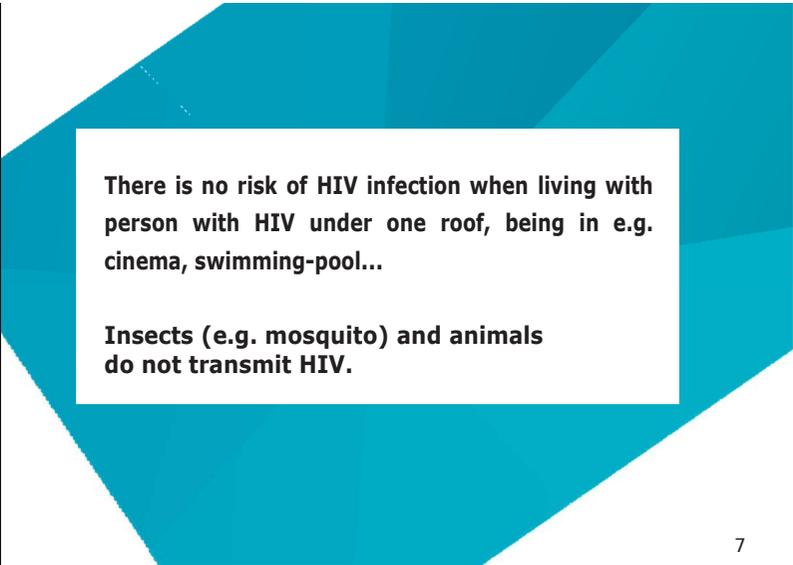
HIV is transmitted via 3 routes:

- 1 **by sexual contacts** - there are evidences that condoms significantly reduce the risk of HIV infection, provided that, among others, the following conditions are met: a condom is of high quality, it is properly worn, it is in place throughout the entire intercourse, it did not rupture or slip;

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- ② **by blood** - when infected blood has contact with injured skin, mucous membrane e.g. with eye, nose, oral cavity, genitals or is injected when using common needles and syringes e.g. to inject narcotic drugs, injectable anabolics;
 - ③ **during pregnancy, delivery, breast feeding from mother infected with HIV to her child** - that is why women planning their pregnancy or pregnant should make a HIV test (gynaecologist is obliged to suggest this test). Each expecting father should also make such test.



There is no risk of HIV infection when living with person with HIV under one roof, being in e.g. cinema, swimming-pool...

Insects (e.g. mosquito) and animals do not transmit HIV.



Why is it worth to make a HIV test?

It is better to make a test and know your serological status than to live with a virus not knowing about it.

Drugs taken on regular basis allow people infected with HIV to live a similar length of life as non-infected ones and live a similar lifestyle, have children and work. A person aware of its infection has an opportunity to take care of its health and the health of its closest ones and protects itself against progressing of fully symptomatic AIDS.

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When future parents are aware of the infection, they can protect their child. The provisions, pursuant to which the gynaecologist is obliged to suggest the HIV test to a pregnant patient, has been in force for several years. Such test is free to the women benefiting from healthcare provided by the National Health Fund. Any expecting dad can make the test free of charge and anonymously in the consultation and diagnostic centre (CDC).





Who should make a HIV test?

The HIV test should be made by any person who:

had ever any sexual contact with at least one person who:

- » made no HIV test and does not know whether she/he is infected or not,
- » is infected with HIV and no condom was used during sexual contact or the condom was damaged,

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- » had many sexual partners,
- » took injectable narcotic drugs,

failed to always use condom during the risky sexual behaviours (including during oral contacts),

recovered from/suffers from sexually transmitted disease, had taken any psychoactive drugs, including injectable narcotic drugs and used equipment which has been also used by the others,

has a tattoo or piercing made with the use of non-sterile equipment,

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had contact with blood of the other persons that had contact with injured skin or mucous membranes, had ever lost control over its behaviour (under the influence of alcohol, narcotic drugs or any psychotropic substances) and could have take part in the situations described above.

When starting a new relationship, it is worth to make a HIV test together with the partner (even if you know such person well). Making a test is the only way to check for HIV infection.

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Where to make the test?

The test can be made free of charge, without referral and anonymously in one of the consultation and diagnostic centres (CDC). Addresses and working hours of the centres are available on the official website of the National AIDS Centre:
www.aids.gov.pl/pkd

When making a test in the consultation and diagnostic centre you are anonymous. You don't need to provide your name and surname or any other data or documents.

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You must be an adult. In the CDC you can talk to the consultant who will help you with determining whether there actually was a risk of infection and whether the test is needed. The consultant will answer all your questions on HIV and AIDS and on any other sexually transmitted diseases.

How the diagnostic test is made?

The test (so called screening test) consist in taking a small blood sample to detect the presence of viral antigen and antibodies. Blood is sampled by a nurse, always with sterile and single-use needles and syringes. You don't need to be on empty stomach. The test result is ready to pick up - depending on the centre - on the next day or after a few days.



When you can be sure that you are not infected?

A negative result (negative/non-reactive) of the screening test means that no HIV antibodies or viral antigen was detected in your blood.

If there was no situations that could lead to HIV infection during 12 weeks preceding the test, a negative result means that the tested person is not infected with HIV. If the period between the test and the last risky situation is shorter than 12 weeks, the result is uncertain and you should repeat the test after this period.

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What does a positive test result mean?

In some cases, a person not infected with HIV will receive a false positive result (positive/reactive) of the screening test. It can result from pregnancy, acute viral infections, vaccinations, autoimmune diseases, etc.



A positive screening test result is not a final result, it must always be checked by a confirmatory test (Western blot).

Such tests are made by several specialist laboratories in Poland. **Do not make the confirmatory test without prior performance of the screening test.**

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What does a positive confirmatory test result mean?

A positive result of confirmatory test informs that the tested person is diagnosed with HIV infection.

Report to the ARV clinic immediately. Registration requires no referral. List of clinics is available at www.aids.gov.pl.

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A person with confirmed infection is obliged to notify his/her sexual partner of this fact. Persons infected with HIV should use condoms during all sexual contacts.

There is no risk of HIV transmission in everyday social and professional contacts.

HIV infection can be prevented!

In the case of any exposure to HIV infection, including rape, injection with a needle of unknown origin or any other event, report to the infectious disease hospital providing antiretroviral therapy **immediately**. The list of such hospitals and hotlines is available at www.aids.gov.pl in the *Exposure to HIV* tab.

The faster you take antiretroviral drugs (preferably within 2-3 hours from the event), the greater chance for avoiding the infection.



Prophylaxis is the most effective when used up to 48 hours from the event. **Remember! Time from event to drug taking is of a key significance!**

Cost of procedure after **emergency** exposure is financed by the health programme of the Ministry of Health *Antiretroviral treatment of people living with HIV in Poland*. In any other cases, there is an option of fully paid post-exposure prophylaxis on the basis of the prescription issued by a health care provider working in one of the listed hospitals. Cost of procedure after **occupational** exposure is covered by the employer or commissioning entity.

More information on HIV, AIDS, making a diagnostic test and treatment is available at the official website of the National AIDS Centre

– www.aids.gov.pl

If you have any detailed questions, ask our HIV AIDS Internet Counselling Centre: poradnia@aids.gov.pl or HIV/AIDS Hotline: 801 888 448* i 22 692 82 26.

* toll for first minute only