

**12. If you continue injecting drugs, here are some things you can do to lower your risk for getting HIV and other infections:**

- Use only new, sterile needles and equipment each time you inject. Sunrise Health Region has needle exchange programs where you can get new needles and equipment. You can call Public Health at 306-786-0600 for detailed information and for support.
- Never share needles or equipment.
- Clean your skin with a new alcohol swab before you inject.
- Be careful not to get someone else's blood on your hands, your needle or equipment.
- Dispose of needles safely after one use. Use a sharps container or keep used needles away from other people.
- Get tested for HIV at least once a year.

**13. Can I tell if I have been infected with HIV by how I feel?**

You can have HIV and not know it. Some people have flu-like symptoms when they first get infected but some people have no symptoms at all.

**14. Can I get vaccinated to prevent HIV?**

No. There is currently no vaccine that will prevent HIV infection.

**15. What if I tested positive for HIV?**

There have been significant advances in the care and treatment of HIV, and with the right treatment, you can stay healthy.

Protect yourself and your partner(s), practice safer sex and do not share drug equipment.

For more information talk to your physician or nurse practitioner, dial Healthline at **8-1-1** or visit **[www.sunrisehealthregion.sk.ca](http://www.sunrisehealthregion.sk.ca)**



If you or a family member would like to be tested please contact:

- **Your Family Physician or Nurse Practitioner**
- **Turning Point Program – Yorkton**  
306-786-0637
- **Local Public Health Office:**
  - Kamsack 306-542-4295 ext 202
  - Canora 306-563-1259
  - Esterhazy 306-745-3200
  - Foam Lake 306-272-3375
  - Langenburg 306-743-2801
  - Melville 306-728-7310
  - Norquay 306-594-2262
  - Preeceville 306-547-2815
  - Yorkton 306-786-0600

If you or a family member would like to access **Mental Health and Addiction Services** call:

**306-786-0558**  
or  
**1-888-989-8444**

**About 1 in every 5  
Canadians with HIV  
does not know  
they have it.  
The only way to know  
for sure is to get tested.  
An HIV test could save  
your life!**



## Frequently Asked Questions:

## HIV & AIDS



## 1. What is HIV?

HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus, the virus that can lead to acquired immuno-deficiency syndrome (AIDS). HIV weakens your immune system, your body's built-in defense against disease and illness.

There have been significant advances in HIV care and with the right treatment you can lead a healthy life with life expectancy near that of non-infected persons.

## 2. How do I know if I have HIV?

You can have HIV without knowing it. You may not look or feel sick for years, but you can still pass the virus on to other people. The only way to know for sure whether you have HIV is to get tested. Knowing your status is important because it helps you make healthy decisions to prevent getting or transmitting HIV.

## 3. Who can get HIV?

Anyone can get HIV, no matter your age, your sex and your race or ethnic origin.

## 4. How is HIV passed on?

You can get or transmit HIV only through specific activities, most commonly, through unprotected sexual behaviors and by sharing needles or other equipment to inject drugs. Only certain body fluids—blood, semen (*cum*), pre-seminal fluid (*pre-cum*), rectal fluids, vaginal fluids, and breast milk—from a person who has HIV can transmit HIV. For transmission to occur, these fluids must come in contact with a mucous membrane or damaged tissue or be directly injected into the bloodstream (from a needle or syringe). Mucous membranes are found inside the rectum, vagina, penis, and mouth.

## 5. HIV can also be passed:

- By sharing of needles and drug injection equipment (including shared use of items such as cookers, water, cotton).
- By unprotected sexual behaviors during vaginal, oral or anal sex.
- By sharing needles or ink to get tattoos.
- By sharing improperly sterilized needles or jewelry for body piercing.
- By sharing improperly sterilized acupuncture needles.
- To a fetus or baby during pregnancy and during breastfeeding.

**If you are pregnant or thinking about getting pregnant, get tested for HIV. If you are HIV positive, with appropriate treatment you can have a healthy baby.**

## 6. Is there a connection between HIV and other sexually transmitted infections?

Yes. Having another sexually transmitted infection (STI) can increase the risk of getting or transmitting HIV. The only way to know for sure is to get tested. If you are HIV-negative but have an STI, you are at greater risk to get HIV if you have unprotected sex with someone with HIV.

## 7. Can I get HIV from injecting drugs?

Yes. Your risk for getting HIV is very high if you use needles or equipment (such as cookers, cotton, or water) after someone with HIV has used them. The needles and equipment may have someone else's blood in them, and blood can transmit HIV. Likewise, you are at risk for getting hepatitis B and C if you share needles and drug equipment because these infections are also transmitted through blood. Another reason people who inject drugs are at greater risk is that when people are high, they are more likely to engage in risky sexual behavior.

## 8. If I already have HIV, can I get another kind of HIV?

Yes. This is called HIV superinfection. HIV superinfection is when a person with HIV gets infected with another strain of the virus. The new strain of HIV can replace the original strain or remain along with the original strain.

## 9. Can I get HIV from casual contact?

No. HIV is **not** transmitted:

- by hugging, shaking hands, sharing toilets, sharing dishes or closed-mouth or "social" kissing with someone who is HIV-positive.
- through saliva, tears, or sweat that is not mixed with the blood of an HIV-positive person.
- by mosquitoes, ticks or other blood-sucking insects.
- through the air.

## 10. How well do condoms prevent HIV?

If you use them the right way every time you have sex, condoms are highly effective in preventing HIV infection. But it's important to educate yourself about how to use them the right way. Condoms can also help prevent other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) you can get through body fluids, like Gonorrhea and Chlamydia. However, they provide less protection against STIs that spread through skin-to-skin contact, like human papillomavirus (HPV) genital herpes, and syphilis.

## 11. How can I prevent getting HIV from drug use?

Stopping injection and other drug use can lower your chances of getting or transmitting HIV a lot. If you keep injecting drugs, use only sterile needles and equipment. Never share needles or drug equipment.