



It is not easy to get AIDS. Unlike many common diseases, HIV cannot get to us through air, food or water. The virus cannot live outside our body for long. We can only catch HIV if the body fluids of an infected person enter our body. The body fluids with a high concentration of HIV are: BLOOD, SEMEN, and VAGINAL FLUIDS.

Human Immunodeficiency Virus H.I.V.



How a person gets H.I.V.

Sexual Intercourse

Most people get HIV by having unprotected sexual intercourse with an infected person.

Unprotected sexual intercourse means having vaginal or anal sex without a condom.

HIV may also be transmitted through oral sex.

Infected Blood

One can get HIV by using or sharing instruments used on someone infected with HIV. These include syringes, tattoo needles, and piercing instruments which have not been properly cleaned.

Infected Mother to her unborn or newborn child

Babies born to mothers with HIV may become infected in the womb before birth, during birth, and sometimes through breast milk.

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Common Questions

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Can someone get HIV from getting a tattoo or a body piercing?

A risk of HIV transmission does exist if instruments contaminated with blood are either not sterilized or disinfected or are used inappropriately between clients. The CDC recommends that instruments that are intended to penetrate the skin be used once, then disposed of or thoroughly cleaned and sterilized.

Are health care workers at risk of getting HIV on the job?

The risk of health care workers getting HIV on the job is very low, especially if they carefully follow universal precautions (i.e., using protective practices and personal protective equipment to prevent HIV and other blood-borne infections). It is important to remember that casual, everyday contact with an HIV-infected person does not expose health care workers or anyone else to HIV. For health care workers on the job, the main risk of HIV transmission is through accidental injuries from needles and other sharp instruments that may be contaminated with the virus. Even this risk is small, however. Scientists estimate that the risk of infection from a needle jab is less than 1 percent, a figure based on the findings of several studies of health care workers who received punctures from HIV-contaminated needles or were otherwise exposed to HIV-contaminated blood. For more information on universal precautions or occupational risks of HIV exposure, call the CDC National Prevention Information Network (operators of the National AIDS Clearinghouse) at 1-800-458-5231.