

# Bloodborne

# facts

## HIV INFORMATION

### WHAT IS AIDS?

AIDS stands for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. AIDS is a serious disease caused by infection with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). HIV attacks the body's immune system. The healthy immune system produces white blood cells and antibodies which attack infectious agents such as viruses and bacteria that enter the body and cause disease. In a person with AIDS, HIV has entered the blood's infection fighting white blood cells and over several years has destroyed the cells. HIV can live in an infected person's body for years before any signs of illness appears. Yet, as the number of white blood cells declines, the immune system becomes less and less able to protect itself against a variety of illnesses. The infected person becomes more susceptible to opportunistic infections or cancers that attack the body and can cause death.

### HOW COMMON IS HIV INFECTION?

The epidemic's impact on our nation's health was highlighted during 1995, when the cumulative number of reported AIDS cases surpassed one-half million. By 2000 the World Health Organization (WHO) projects a cumulative total of 30-40 million HIV infected men, women, and children.

Worldwide, the vast majority of people infected with HIV/AIDS are heterosexual. The demographics of the epidemic in the U.S. seem to be slowly shifting to women, blacks, and young people. A woman with an HIV infected male partner is 10 times more likely to get the virus than is a man with an infected female partner. AIDS is the leading cause of death for men 25-44 and the third leading cause of death among women.

### WHAT IS THE HIV ANTIBODY TEST?

What many people call the "AIDS" test is not a test for AIDS at all, but for the antibodies of the HIV which causes AIDS. Once infected with HIV, the immune system produces antibodies in an attempt to defend itself against HIV. The test identifies these antibodies. Therefore the test is accurately called the "HIV antibody test."

### WHAT IS THE INCUBATION PERIOD FOR AIDS SYMPTOMS?

The incubation period is the time between infection and the onset of symptoms of disease. The incubation period between HIV infection and the onset of AIDS can vary anywhere from six months to an unknown period of time. Some people who are HIV antibody positive may never develop AIDS. CDC has stated that the average length of incubation at this time is seven years or more, however, this number continues to change due to various factors.

#### PHASES OF HIV INFECTION

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Acute HIV Disease	Asymptomatic HIV Disease ("HIV Positive")	Chronic Symptomatic HIV Disease (AIDS Related Complex)	Advanced HIV Disease (AIDS)
days - weeks	years	months - years	months - years

### WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF HIV INFECTION?

The symptoms of HIV infection are the symptoms of the diseases that attack the body because of a weakened immune system. Most of the following symptoms are not specific to HIV infection: fever that lasts from a few days to longer than a month, periods of excessive sweating, especially at night, loss of appetite, chronic or long lasting fatigue, weight loss of more than 10% of body weight, muscle and joint pain, unexplained long lasting sore throat, unexplained swollen lymph glands, diarrhea lasting longer than a month with no other disease, lingering infections. As the immune system becomes more compromised the HIV infected person may acquire opportunistic diseases such as Kaposi's sarcoma, Pneumocystis carinii pneumonia, tuberculosis, neurological disorders such as meningitis, and herpes simplex infections. At this point, the HIV infected person is usually diagnosed with AIDS.

### HOW IS HIV INFECTION (AIDS) TREATED?

The full disease state of AIDS is associated with life threatening infectious diseases and cancers. Treatment usually depends on the particular disease. The full effects of HIV infection (AIDS) may appear 5-10 years after the original infection with the virus. As advances are made in the treatments of HIV-associated illness and immune disorders it becomes increasingly beneficial for people infected with HIV to know early whether or not they have the disease.