

ACQUIRED IMMUNODEFICIENCY SYNDROME (AIDS)

- Caused by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)
- Transmission occurs through contact with infected blood, semen, and vaginal secretions.
- Oral secretions and breast milk have been implicated. The virus is not viable outside the body.
- The adult is considered HIV positive when blood tests reveal the presence of HIV or antibodies to the HIV.
- Incubation period estimates range from ½ to 10 years and may be longer.
- The antibodies produced by the body can generally first be detected in the blood in 2 weeks to 3 months or longer after infection.
- A test that detects the presence of virus within 24 hours of exposure is available.

The HIV is present in the following secretions:

Blood

Tears

Semen

Breast milk

Vaginal discharges

Cerebrospinal fluid

Saliva

Clinical findings

Subjective:

- Anorexia
- Fatigue
- Dyspnea
- Chills
- Sore throat

Objective:

- Positive test for HIV antibody
- Positive test for the presence of HIV itself
- Night sweats
- Enlarged lymph nodes
- Wasting syndrome (weight loss exceeding 10% baseline weight, chronic diarrhea for more than 30 days, chronic weakness or constant fever)
- HIV encephalopathy (memory loss, lack of coordination, partial paralysis, mental deterioration)

Therapeutic interventions

- There is no cure
- Prevention is the key to control
- Pharmacologic therapy

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TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

- As a medical practitioner, how do you render care to patients with HIV?
- Give a brief description of AIDS.
- How can someone acquire HIV?
- How can someone protect himself/herself from acquiring HIV?
- How do you give counseling to patients with HIV?