

What is AIDS? - HIV/AIDS 101, part 2



What does "AIDS" mean? AIDS stands for acquired immune deficiency syndrome: **Acquired** means that someone is not born with AIDS but can get it later. **Immune Deficiency** means a weakness in the body's system that fights diseases. **Syndrome** means a group of health problems that make up a disease.

The medicines used to treat HIV are called antiretroviral therapy or ART. If you have HIV and are not taking ART, the virus will slowly weaken your immune system. You will slowly progress to AIDS, the late stage of HIV infection.

Symptoms can include:

- Rapid weight loss
- Repeated fevers or profuse night sweats
- Extreme and unexplained tiredness
- Long lasting swelling of the lymph nodes in the armpits, groin, or neck
- Diarrhea that lasts for more than a week
- Sores of the mouth, anus, or genitals
- Pneumonia
- Red, brown, pink, or purplish blotches on or under the skin or inside the mouth, nose, or eyelids
- Memory loss, depression, and other nervous system disorders



Without treatment, people with AIDS typically survive about 3 years. People with AIDS can have a high viral load, which is a measure of how much virus is in the blood. They will be very infectious.



Be sure to get answers to any questions you have about HIV/AIDS. Your public health department, health care provider, and public library can help.