

I have HIV. Does that mean I have AIDS? - HIV/AIDS 101, part 3



No. The terms “HIV” and “AIDS” can be confusing because both terms refer to the same infection. However, “HIV” refers to the virus itself.

“AIDS” refers to the late stage of HIV infection, when an HIV-infected person’s immune system is severely damaged and they have a hard time fighting diseases and certain cancers.

Before the development of certain medications, people with HIV could progress to AIDS in just a few years.



But today, most HIV-positive people who are taking HIV medicines do not progress to AIDS.

HIV medicines are called antiretroviral therapy or ART. If someone has HIV and they take ART every day, they can keep the level of HIV virus in their body very low.



This will help keep them strong and healthy and reduce the likelihood that they will ever progress to AIDS.

Having a very low level of HIV will also help lower the risk of spreading HIV to others.

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.

