

The stages of HIV/AIDS - HIV/AIDS 101, part 6

Depending on the stage of HIV, the symptoms vary from person to person. There are three stages of HIV infection: acute, clinical latency, and AIDS. Not all people infected with HIV will experience all these symptoms.

Acute Stage of HIV

This stage is also called the early stage. Some people may have a flu-like illness within 2-4 weeks after HIV infection. But some people may not feel sick during this stage.



Flu-like symptoms can include:

- Fever
- Chills
- Rash
- Night sweats
- Muscle aches
- Sore throat
- Tiredness
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Mouth sores

These symptoms can last anywhere from a few days to several weeks. During this time, HIV infection may not show up on an HIV test, even if they have a lot of the virus in their body. Someone should not assume they have HIV just because they have some of these symptoms. Each of these symptoms can be caused by other illnesses.

Some people who have HIV do not show any symptoms for 10 years or more. A person is at high risk of spreading HIV to others during the acute stage of HIV infection, even if they have no symptoms.

Clinical Latency Stage

After the early stage of HIV infection, it moves into a stage called the clinical latency stage, also called chronic HIV infection. During this stage, HIV is still active but reproduces very slowly. People with chronic HIV infection may not have any HIV-related symptoms, or may only have mild ones.



HIV medicines are called antiretroviral therapy or ART. People who are **not** taking ART may be in this stage for ten years or longer. People who **are** taking ART the correct way, every single day, may be in this stage for more than twenty years.

It's important to remember that people can still spread HIV to others during this stage, even if they have no symptoms. However, people who are on ART and

have a very low amount of virus in their blood are much less likely to spread HIV than those who have high amounts of virus.

Progression to AIDS

If someone has HIV and is not on ART, the virus will slowly weaken the immune system and they will progress to AIDS, also called acquired immunodeficiency syndrome. AIDS is the late stage of HIV infection.

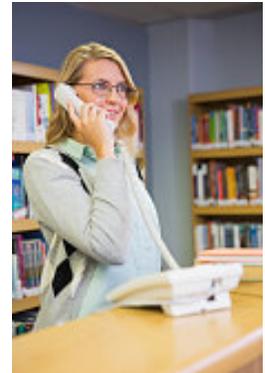


Symptoms can include:

- Rapid weight loss
- Fever or profuse night sweats
- Extreme tiredness
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Diarrhea
- Sores of the mouth, anus, or genitals
- Pneumonia
- Memory loss and depression

Many of the severe symptoms of AIDS come from **opportunistic infections**. They are called opportunistic infections, or OIs, because they take the opportunity to cause infection in someone with a very weak immune system.

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.



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