

HIV/AIDS - Signs & Symptoms

Early HIV: Signs and Symptoms

As early as **2-4 weeks** after being infected with HIV (but up to **3 months later**), people can become sick. It is often said to feel like “the worst flu ever.” This is called *acute retroviral syndrome (ARS)*, or *primary HIV infection*. ARS is the body’s response to HIV infection. During this time of feeling ill, there are high levels of virus in the blood, which means that HIV can be spread to others more easily.



Symptoms of ARS can include:

- Fever
- Chills
- Rash
- Night sweats
- Muscle aches
- Sore throat
- Sores in the mouth
- Swollen *lymph nodes*
- Tiredness



It is important to know that **not everyone gets ARS after they become infected with HIV**. Some people do not feel sick at all.

Chronic or Latency HIV: Signs and Symptoms

When some time has passed after being infected, HIV becomes less active in the body, even though it is still present.

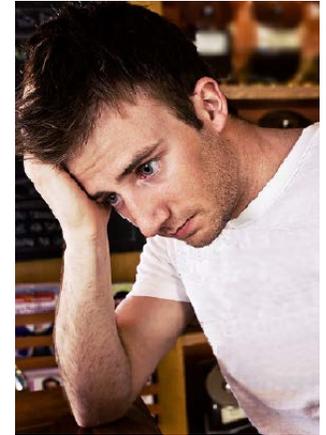


During this time, many people do not have any symptoms of HIV infection.

This is called the “chronic” or “latency” phase. This time of being infected with HIV but having no symptoms can last up to **10 years**—or even longer.

AIDS: Signs and Symptoms

Over time HIV infection damages the immune system enough that it progresses to AIDS. With AIDS, many people begin to suffer from tiredness, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, fever, chills and night sweats. At the late stages of AIDS there is *extreme* weakness and weight loss. Many of the signs and symptoms of AIDS come from **opportunistic infections**. These are infections that happen to people who have damaged immune systems.



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



Text adapted from materials on the AIDS.gov website.
Handout by Healthy Roads Media (www.healthyroadsmedia.org),
Funding from Division of Specialized Information Services of the
National Library of Medicine It can be freely distributed under the
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs License
(<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/us>)