

# Human Immunodeficiency Virus

## HIV

HIV is a risk group 3 virus and is the causative agent of AIDS. It is considered a **reproductive pathogen** due to its ability to be transmitted sexually as well as from mother to infant during pregnancy, delivery, or breastfeeding. There is no approved immunization for HIV.

### How can I be exposed to HIV?

- Exposure occurs via contact with oral, rectal or vaginal mucosa during sexual activity, transfusion of contaminated blood products, or by using contaminated equipment during injection drug use.
- HIV may be transmitted from mother to infant during pregnancy, delivery, or breastfeeding.
- Laboratory personnel can be exposed via percutaneous injuries such as needlesticks and animal bites/scratches as well as mucous membrane exposure to HIV-infected specimens.

### How can I protect myself from exposure?

- Avoid skin contact by wearing solid front gowns with tight fitting wrists and gloves.
- Avoid contact with non-intact skin (cut, scrape, eczema, etc.) by covering wounds with waterproof bandages or avoiding work until healed.
- Avoid mucous membrane contact by wearing eye/splash protection.
- Avoid respiratory contact by wearing respiratory protection and using a biosafety cabinet and other primary containment devices.
- Avoid use of sharps exposed to HIV-infected samples and/or animals.

### What should I do if I think I've been exposed to HIV?

Wash the affected area immediately for 15 minutes with soap and water. Seek medical attention within 1 hour.

### What symptoms should I look for after a potential exposure?

Non-specific “flu-like” and “mononucleosis-like” symptoms, such as muscle and joint pain, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, headache, and weight loss.

### How long does it take for symptoms to develop?

Generally, 1 to 3 months, but could be 1 to 15 years

### Can I transmit it to other people?

Yes, transmission has occurred via mother to child, sexual contact, and needle sharing.

### Can I transmit it to my pets?

No, humans are the only known host.

### Can it survive on surfaces?

Drying in the environment rapidly reduces HIV concentration, however under experimental conditions HIV in serum can survive for at least 7 days.

See *Pathogen Safety Data Sheet* for More Information

