

Living Well with AIMGA

VOL. 12 - HIV/AIDS



OVERVIEW

Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is a virus that attacks one's immune system. If left untreated, HIV can lead to **acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS)**. There is currently no effective cure. Once people get HIV, they have it for life. However, with appropriate and effective treatment and care that has been developed over the years, HIV has become a manageable chronic health condition, enabling people living with HIV to have long and healthy lives. In commemoration of World AIDS Day on December 1st, join AIMGA in learning more about AIDS/HIV awareness through reading Volume 12 of this Living Well with AIMGA newsletter. Together, people globally unite to show support for people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS and to remember those who lost their lives to HIV/AIDS. Educate yourself today!

Sources: [WHO, 2023](#); [Mayo Clinic, 2023](#); [United Nations, 2023](#)



HEALTH REMINDERS!

- To date HIV/AIDS has no cure, but if you have been diagnosed with HIV, it is crucial to take your antiretroviral medication as prescribed by your doctor. A good adherence to your treatment plan can help to control the virus's replication and improve your overall health.
- Living with HIV/AIDS can be challenging, so it is important to seek support from healthcare professionals, support groups, and/or mental health services. A strong Support system allows you to effectively deal with the psychological and emotional aspects of living with HIV/AIDS.
- Practice safe sex: proper and consistent use of condoms, notify your sexual partner and get tested together.
- Regular testing is also important, especially for those with high-risk behaviours and/or who are sexually active. Early detection provides the opportunity to have a good treatment plan and a longer, healthier life.
- Stay updated on the latest research and development on HIV prevention and treatment. This will give you the power to make informed decisions about your health.

Sources: [WHO, 2023](#); [CDC, 2022](#); [NIH, 2020](#); [Phillips, 2023](#)



RED FLAGS

- 1 The symptoms of HIV and AIDS vary, depending on the phase of infection. If you experience the following [symptoms](#), please check in with your doctor to get tested: fever, headache, muscle aches and joint pain, rash, sore throat and painful mouth sores, swollen lymph glands on neck, diarrhea, weight loss, cough, night sweats. These are common signs of **Primary infection (Acute HIV)**, which can happen within 2-4 weeks after the virus enters the body and is characterized by a flu-like illness that can last up to a few weeks. During this 2-4 week highly infectious period, some tests may not be able to detect the virus, but you can still pass the virus to others, as your viral load is quite high at this time. Your health care provider may ask you to repeat the test if it's negative and there's a possibility you have HIV.
- 2 In the **Clinical latent infection (Chronic HIV)** phase, HIV is still present in the body and in white blood cells. However, many people may not have any symptoms or infections during this time. This stage can last for many years if you're receiving antiretroviral therapy (ART). Some people develop more severe disease much sooner.
- 3 In the **Symptomatic HIV infection phase**, the virus continues to multiply and destroy your immune cells, which are the cells in your body that help fight off germs.

You may develop mild infections or chronic signs and symptoms such as: fever, fatigue, swollen lymph nodes — often one of the first signs of HIV infection, diarrhea, weight loss, oral yeast infection, shingles, or pneumonia.

- 4 **Progression to AIDS** - Access to better antiviral treatments has dramatically decreased deaths from AIDS globally. Thanks to these life-saving treatments, most people with HIV today do not develop AIDS. Untreated, HIV typically turns into AIDS in about 8-10 years. When AIDS occurs, this means your immune system was severely damaged. You'll be more likely to develop diseases that wouldn't usually cause illness in a person with a healthy immune system. These are known as opportunistic infections or opportunistic cancers. Click [here](#) to learn more about the signs and symptoms of some of these infections or read the hot topic above to learn about these types of cancers.
- 5 If you think you may have been infected with HIV or you are at risk of contracting the virus, please contact your doctor to get tested and to seek more health advice.

Sources: [Mayo Clinic, 2022](#); [Healthline, 2014](#); [Vaillant & Gulick, 2022](#)

DID YOU KNOW?



AIMGA experts are available to speak to your organization on this topic.

Book your presentation today by emailing drew@aimga.ca

For more information, check out the full version of the "Living Well With AIMGA" Newsletter by scanning the QR code below with your phone!



<https://aimga.ca/wp-content/uploads/12.December2023-LivingWithAIMGA-Newsletter.pdf>