

sex talk.

answers to your questions about sex and relationships

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Campus Health offers confidential HIV and STD testing. Call (520) 621-9202 to schedule an appointment.

Q What is the difference between HIV and AIDS?

A. HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus; it is the virus that leads to AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome), the most advanced stage in the course of the HIV infection. After exposure and infection of HIV, the disease progresses through the following steps:

Initial Infection: 2-4 weeks after infection, the virus quickly multiplies in the body and flu-like symptoms (mild aches/pains, low grade fever) are experienced, lasting about 10 days. Antibodies are not yet detectable on an HIV antibody test.

Seroconversion: The body produces antibodies to the virus and begins to fight the HIV. At this stage, HIV antibody tests such as the ELISA and Western Blot can be used to determine an HIV infection.

Asymptomatic: HIV+ individuals live an average of 12-15 years without symptoms.

Symptomatic: As time progresses, HIV continues to damage the vital T cells of the immune system. HIV+ individuals can experience moderate to severe symptoms. Some include: fatigue, shingles, low grade fever, weight loss, swollen lymph nodes, abnormal pap smears, and persistent dry cough.

AIDS: The AIDS diagnosis is given when an HIV+

individual has one or more of the following signs or symptoms, defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

- Less than 200 T cells/mm³ of blood (in healthy immune systems there are 800-1,200 T cells/mm³)
- T cells accounting for less than 14% of all lymphocytes (one type of white blood cell)
- One or more opportunistic infections (e.g. pneumonia, Kaposi sarcoma, invasive cervical cancer, wasting syndrome)

With the continual development of powerful antiretroviral therapies, HIV/AIDS individuals are living longer and healthier lives. However, medication is expensive and comes with many side effects.

HIV does not discriminate based on gender, race, socioeconomic status, religion, etc. There are over 33.3 million people worldwide living with HIV/AIDS; 0 have been cured. If you are sexually active, condoms are the best way to protect you and your partner against HIV and many STDs.



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Have a question? Send it to sextalk@email.arizona.edu

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