

HIV AND MARRIAGE

What you should know



**For more information
about HIV/AIDS and
a list of test sites visit:**
[https://dph.georgia.gov/
georgia-hivaids-care-
prevention](https://dph.georgia.gov/georgia-hivaids-care-prevention)



What is HIV?

HIV is a sexually transmitted infection (STI). HIV interferes with your body's ability to fight infection and disease. Once people get HIV, they have it for life. Currently, there is no effective cure for HIV, but with proper medical care, it can be controlled. People with HIV who get effective HIV treatment can live long, healthy lives and protect their partners. If HIV is not treated, it can lead to acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), a chronic, potentially life-threatening condition.

How do I know if I have HIV?

The only way to know if you have HIV is to get tested. Knowing your HIV status helps you make healthy decisions to prevent getting or transmitting HIV. To find an HIV testing location, call the Georgia HIV & STI InfoLine at 1-800-551-2728.

Are there symptoms of HIV?

Many people with HIV do not have any symptoms. Sometimes people have symptoms within 2-4 weeks after infection. Other people may not have symptoms until HIV has caused AIDS. Symptoms of HIV can include:

- Fever
- Fatigue
- Rash
- Muscle aches
- Swollen lymph nodes

Symptoms can last for a few days or several weeks. Having these symptoms alone doesn't mean you have HIV. Other illnesses can cause similar symptoms. The only way to know for sure if you have HIV is to get a test.

What are the risk factors for HIV?

Anyone of any age, race, sex or sexual orientation can be infected with HIV/AIDS. However, you're at greatest risk of HIV/AIDS if you:

- Have unprotected sex. Use a new latex or polyurethane condom every time you have sex. Anal sex is riskier than is vaginal sex. Your risk of HIV increases if you have multiple sexual partners.
- Have an STI. Many STIs produce open sores on your genitals. These sores act as doorways for HIV to enter your body.
- Use illicit injection drugs. People who use illicit injection drugs often share needles and syringes. This exposes them to droplets of other people's blood.

How can you protect yourself from HIV?

- Get tested at least once or more often if you have certain risk factors.
- Use condoms the right way every time you have anal or vaginal sex.
- Choose activities with little to no risk like oral sex.
- Don't inject drugs, or if you do, don't share needles, syringes, or other drug injection equipment.
- If you engage in behaviors that may increase your chances of getting HIV, ask your health care provider if pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is right for you.
- If you think you've been exposed to HIV within the last 3 days, ask a health care provider about post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) right away. PEP can prevent HIV, but it must be started within 72 hours.
- Get tested and treated for other STDs.

Are there any other STDs that I should know about?

HIV is not the only infection that is sexually transmitted. Some STDs such as genital warts, genital herpes, and HIV can be treated but cannot be cured. Others such as chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis can be cured but may cause serious problems if left untreated. These problems can include sterility for both men and women; cancers linked to genital warts; complications for babies born to women with untreated infections; spontaneous abortions; and increased risk for getting HIV.

How do you keep yourself healthy and protect others if you have HIV?

Find HIV care and stay in HIV care.

Take your HIV treatment as prescribed.

Get and keep an undetectable viral load. This is the best way to stay healthy and protect others. If you have an undetectable viral load, you will not transmit HIV through sex. If your viral load is not undetectable—or does not stay undetectable—you can still protect your partners by using other HIV prevention options.

Anyone can be infected with HIV. Learn the facts about HIV before you get married to protect yourself and your partner.